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THE FRANCE OF TODAY

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BY

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NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The fact that this book has had the good fortune to reach a new edition enables me to correct certain errors concerning the university system, into which, at least apparently, I had fallen. This I may best do by paraphrasing letters from French friends who have had the kindness to point them out.

On page 10, I hastily grouped together the *Collège de France*, the *École Normale* and the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*. My intention was merely to imply that these establishments were, each in its own way, apart from the general university system which I was trying to expound. The grouping of them together was at best infelicitous; and certainly the subsequent comments on them were, in various ways, mistaken.

The *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*, writes one friend, is completely independent of the State. There is no need that its professors have any university degree whatever. The authorities of the school choose any one whom they deem fit, and hold this freedom of choice among the chief elements of their strength. For it permits them to count among their instructors men of

action—officials, writers, economists, politicians, bankers, and the like—who have proved their personal distinction and importance by other means than the winning of diplomas.

This school, another friend writes, ought in no wise to be grouped with the two others; for it is completely private, and in its private capacity it grants degrees, which have moral, though unofficial, weight.

With the *Collège de France* and the *École Normale* this is not the case, he goes on. The *École Normale Supérieure*—near the Panthéon—is part of the university system. It is an establishment where young men are admitted, after examinations, to prepare for secondary teaching. While at the school they pass their examinations for the degree of *licencié*,—though not at the school itself, but before the university faculties. Then, on leaving the school, they present themselves in competition—something more than an examination—for the *agrégation*. There are many kinds of *agrégation*—in letters, in history, in modern languages, in physical science, in natural science, in mathematics, etc.—and the winning of the title of *agrégé* is difficult. For example, when only ten places are open for competition, thirty candidates or more—already *licenciés*—may present themselves. The successful ones are eligible to give secondary

instruction, but not the highest. To become a member of a faculty—to give the highest instruction, which another correspondent adds is sometimes enviously described as tertiary—the degree of doctor is requisite; and this degree is not competitive, but purely a matter of learning.

On the other hand, a member of the *Institut* is eligible for any appointment whatever. This title dispenses with all others. A member of the *Institut*, even though neither doctor, *agrégé*, nor *licencié*, might perfectly well be a full professor at the Sorbonne. Incidentally, my correspondent adds, the title of *Professor*, by itself, is insignificant—as indeed is the case in America. Every master of a *lycée* or a *collège*, for example, holds it as a matter of course.

As to the *Collège de France*, he goes on, it has nothing in common either with the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*, or with the *École Normale Supérieure*—itself an establishment which must be clearly distinguished from the separate normal schools, for men and for women, where school teachers are trained in every provincial university. Scientifically—in point of exact scholarship, whether in letters or in science—the *Collège de France*, he tells me, is the highest institution of instruction in France. Its purpose is to advance learning, as well as to prepare for the highest examinations.

The professors are absolutely free, within the limits of their chairs, to treat any part of their subjects, no matter how limited or minute, provided that they go to the bottom of it. A professor of the languages and literature of Southern Europe, for example, may confine himself at one time to Dante, at another to Provençal grammar, and so on. The chief characteristic of the *Collège de France*, in fact, is this absolute individual independence of its professors. Furthermore, it grants no degrees, and demands none as requisite for its professorships. A man who holds only the degree of bachelor, which would not regularly entitle him to give even secondary instruction, may, if otherwise competent, be appointed professor there.

Again, it appears that I was mistaken in supposing that official inspectors at present concern themselves with the higher instruction. They used to; but their duties are now confined to primary and to secondary schools. In any event, my correspondent adds, they would have had no right to inspect the *Collège de France*, where more than half the professors are members of the *Institut*.

À propos of the *Institut*, he goes on, one might well have pointed out that the *Académie Française* is at present less eminent in the matter

of erudition than its less widely celebrated fellows. Its chief official function is to prepare a dictionary—a task for which it has no exceptional philological equipment. Meanwhile the other academies—of *Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, of *Sciences*, and so on—are extremely active, and have great influence on the progress of learning.

Another correspondent has had the kindness to show me mistaken in supposing (p. 12) that a certificate of primary instruction is needful for admission to a *lycée* or a *collège*. At present, it seems, these institutions themselves give primary instruction as well as secondary.

It is hardly conceivable that these errors are all which have escaped my notice, or my observation. On the whole, however, my correspondents have told me that the outlines of my treatment, even of the universities, seem to them true. When it comes to the later chapters, which concern questions of opinion rather than of fact, they have generally been agreed that, while my point of view must evidently be that of a foreign friend, and therefore my opinions must be debatable, my comments are intelligible, suggestive, and earnestly sympathetic. B. W.

Boston, 16 February, 1908.

NOTE

In this book my effort has been to set forth the impressions of France made on me during the year when I was a lecturer at French Universities. The lectureship in question was founded by Mr. James Hazen Hyde, who has done so much to promote mutual understanding between France and America. In substantially their present form the eight chapters were given as lectures at the Lowell Institute, Boston, in November and December, 1906, and four of them have been published in Scribner's Magazine during 1907.

B. W.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	The Universities	1
II.	The Structure of Society . .	47
III.	The Family	101
IV.	The French Temperament . .	145
V.	The Relation of Literature to Life	191
VI.	The Question of Religion . .	239
VII.	The Revolution and Its Effects	292
VIII.	The Republic and Democracy .	338

THE FRANCE OF TODAY

I

THE UNIVERSITIES

IN the autumn of 1904 I found myself unexpectedly charged with the pleasant duty of what may be described as an academic mission to France. The authorities of Harvard University were so kind as to make me the first of the representatives whom they have been invited to send, year by year, to the Sorbonne and to other French universities for the purpose of lecturing about America. At the moment I knew so little of the university system in which I was to have a temporary status that I was unaware of my ignorance.

One of my first calls in Paris began to enlighten me. A professor of the Sorbonne, who had sent me friendly word of when I might find him at home, phrased his welcome in terms which meant more than I quite understood at first; for he addressed me as "cher collègue," thus assuring me that, for the while, I was his academic equal. Something of what this involved, concerning the dignity and the responsibility of

my position, he soon proceeded to explain in a pleasantly precise way.

The opening scene of our interview was brief and cordially formal. It ended with an invitation to pass from the salon where I had been received into the professor's study. This proved to be a snug library full of books and papers, and remarkable chiefly for a blackboard on which was sketched a somewhat complicated diagram, resembling the plans of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise to be found in most editions of the "Divine Comedy." This likeness, indeed, was so marked that, forgetting what my friend's special branch of learning might be, I was disposed to take for granted that he was occupied with some minute study of Dante. In fact, it presently appeared, this impressive diagram had been ingeniously devised for my personal benefit. Rightly assuming that I could not find my way in France without a clear knowledge of where I belonged there, he had prepared it to illustrate a concise little discourse on the present structure and constitution of the French universities. His subject, I may add, proved really analogous to Dante's scheme of futurity. For in French universities — and for that matter one is tempted to say throughout French society — everyone seems to have a place as definite as that of any

denizen of any circle in all the hundred cantos. My own — obviously unusual — began to define itself while my friend, chalk in hand, proceeded with his exposition; and with the process came to me my first clear conception of the extraordinarily systematic nature of the surroundings amid which I was to find my way during the months to come, and of the precise point of view from which I was to observe other aspects of French life.

The whole educational system of modern France, as my friend's diagram instantly and constantly reminded me, is completely centralized. It is as much a unit as is the public-school system of any American city. From beginning to end, it is controlled by one single organization, which has for its official centre the Ministry of Public Instruction, in Paris. At its head is the Minister of Public Instruction.

As everyone knows, however, the Minister of Public Instruction is a member of the cabinet. Under the parliamentary system of government, this involves two consequences: he is compelled to attend not only his cabinet meetings, but also the regular sessions of the legislative body of which he is a member; and at any moment a change in the government may displace him. The Minister, accordingly, though nominally and

officially the head of the whole educational system, and *ex officio* Rector of the University of Paris, has other business, of more immediate importance, as the representative, in both legislative and executive councils, of the interests committed to his charge. So far as the duties of his office concern the actual conduct of French education, they are consequently performed by permanent officers, nominally his lieutenants, who have their offices in the building of the Ministry. Of these officers, three — independent of each other — are virtually supreme, each in his own field. These are the Directors of the three distinct phases of education throughout the country — primary, secondary, and superior. The true head of the University of Paris, the while, is not the Minister, who bears the official title of Rector, but the Vice-Rector, whose tenure of office is not disturbed by changes in the government.

As a matter of fact, the University of Paris remains what it has been for centuries — by far the most important centre of French scholarship, and one of the two or three most important centres of scholarship in the world. Constitutionally, however, this predominance is no longer recognized. In theory the University of Paris is only one of some fifteen or sixteen universities which together control the entire educational

system of France, much as bishoprics control an ecclesiastical system. There are educational maps of France on which the boundaries of the universities are as definite as those of the States in our American Union; and like our States, the French universities are independent of one another, each sovereign within its limits, and are united only in their subjection to a common central authority. In principle, what is true of one is true of all; the hegemony of Paris is at this moment only a tradition. It is a tradition, however, of such immemorial and indefinite strength and endurance that the Vice-Rector of the University of Paris, though nominally of slightly lower rank than the rectors of provincial universities, is actually the most powerful official in the whole educational system. His immediate contact with the Directors of all three grades of education makes him, in practice, the most influential personage of the whole organization.

Of the whole organization, we must remember. For the most salient difference between the French system of education and the systems prevalent in England and in America springs from the fact that the rector of a French university is the presiding officer not only of the higher educational bodies under his charge, but of the secondary and the primary instruction as

well. Within the geographical limits of his university, he performs virtually all the duties of the Minister of Public Instruction; and he is accordingly in direct communication with all three of the Directors of Education — primary, secondary, and superior. Through them he is the official means of communication between his university and the Minister, who is nominally lord of all.

Each university, in fact, controls education in all its stages. There is everywhere a system of primary schools, where elementary education is compulsory for children. There is everywhere a system of secondary schools — generally called *lycées* or *collèges* — where instruction in letters or in science is carried to a point about equivalent to that required for admission to a well-established American college of the better sort. And in each university of France there are four faculties of superior or higher instruction: the faculties of letters, of science, of law, and of medicine. Generally, as in Paris, these faculties have their seats in the same town; but this is not necessarily the case. In at least one instance a faculty of science and a faculty of letters of the same university are situated in separate cities some little distance apart — Marseilles and Aix. Every university, however, must possess all four faculties, each under the presidency of a dean.

And at a few universities there was, until very lately, a fifth faculty — of Protestant theology. For obvious ecclesiastical reasons the historic faculties of orthodox Catholic theology cannot fall within the system. To extremely conservative minds, accordingly, particularly in the provinces, the present principles of the French universities cannot help seeming in some degree anticlerical.

The faculties of higher education, though nominally the chief bodies under the presidency of the rectors, appear, in point of fact, to be more nearly autonomous than you would suppose. Except in Paris, so far as my observation went, the rectors seemed more concerned with questions of secondary education than with those of the higher — spending a good deal of their time in travelling about their jurisdictions, and examining the condition of schools, much as conscientious bishops might keep their eyes on the outlying regions of their dioceses, and leave their cathedrals to the care of trustworthy chapters. But in all cases the rector of a university is the responsible head of all education; and, as we have seen, he is the regular medium of communication between his jurisdiction and the Ministry of Public Instruction.

This state of things might evidently put in

his hands a degree of power virtually autocratic. For the rest a rector — whatever his personal integrity, which may be confidently presumed — is after all a fallible human being. In consequence, so far as his reports deal with the actual state of the instruction in his charge, and particularly with the character and the skill of individual instructors, high and low, they are kept in check by a system of regular inspection, centred in the Ministry at Paris. A considerable corps of official Inspectors are always engaged in visiting the universities throughout France. They have the right of access everywhere; and, though such of them as I happened to meet were delightful people, their visitations are naturally objects of a certain terror. For each visit results in an official report, duly filed at the Ministry; and on these reports, taken in conjunction with those of the rectors, hang the professional prospects of every teacher from Flanders to Spain and from the Atlantic to the Alps. Incidentally, it seems probable that the rectors themselves are objects of a supervision as close as any applied to their subordinates, of whatever rank.

How far this system of record is carried may be inferred from my own experience. In the course of my duties I had occasion to call several times on the Director of Higher Education.

In each instance, when I was ushered into his presence, I found him seated at his desk with an open portfolio before him. This portfolio, it presently appeared, contained my *dossier* — that is, all the letters I had written to him, copies of all which had been sent me officially, and presumably various other memoranda concerning my credentials, my performances, and my character. During my visit to a provincial university a little later, I had the privilege of finding myself, for a day or two, in the same town and at the same hotel with an accomplished Inspector of Instruction in Modern Languages, who had an agreeably expert knowledge of the local vintages. The pleasure I derived from his society was in no degree impaired by the probability that his honest estimate of what my academic mission amounted to might find its way to my *dossier* at Paris. But if I had been a Frenchman whose whole future depended on such statements of opinion my sentiments might have been less cheerful. For, as I understand the matter, everybody who has ever taught anything in France, in whatever grade, has his *dossier* duly on file at the Ministry. And whenever any question arises, especially concerning promotion, these exhaustive records are pitilessly scrutinized.

Of course, there are institutions of learning in

France which do not fall within the limits of this rigid system. There are private schools, analogous to private schools in America. Until lately there have been very highly developed schools under the direct control of the teaching orders of the clergy. And there are many established institutions of the highest education — such as the Collège de France, the École Normale, or the École Libre des Sciences Politiques — which form no regular part of the university organization. The position of these somewhat irregular seminaries of instruction, however, — whether they be semi-official, or in no way connected with the government, — is not so independent as it might seem. For, as I understand the matter, they are open in two distinct ways to official supervision and control. In the first place, they may always be visited by the regular inspectors of the government schools; in the second place, and far more importantly, no one may legally teach in them who has not taken the university degree which would be required for teaching of similar grade in the regular system. And only the established universities, which are under the direct authority of the Ministry, have authority to confer valid degrees or educational certificates of any kind whatever. To obtain credit for work done at a private school, accordingly, or at any insti-

tution not completely official in character, all students must present themselves at the regular examinations of the universities. And this credit is no mere matter of form; without at least a degree from the secondary schools, almost every professional career in France — even that of an apothecary — is absolutely closed.

A curious example of how much this signifies occurred at a provincial university where I happened to arrive while examinations were in progress. Two or three candidates, evidently strangers, appeared in clerical garb. On inquiry, it turned out that they had studied at a church school in the jurisdiction of another, and a rather remote, university. The pronounced opposition of the government to many forms of ecclesiastical instruction had resulted in a warmth of feeling which forbade them, as a matter of principle, to recognize the educational system of the state in their immediate neighborhood. At the same time, they needed degrees from the state, in order to pursue their careers. So they had resorted to the expedient of taking a day's journey and presenting themselves in a strange city for examinations which, under ordinary circumstances, they would have taken at home.

The degree which these young ecclesiastics already possessed was one which produces a cer-

tain confusion in the minds of people accustomed to the university systems of England and of America. It was that of *bachelier*, which sounds very like ours of bachelor of arts. In point of fact, however, the French degree of *bachelier* is given not at the completion of a course of higher education, but at that of secondary. As I understand the matter, primary instruction in France is absolutely compulsory; like primary instruction anywhere else, it teaches everybody to read, to write, and to manage the elementary processes of arithmetic; it offers, at the same time, various other kinds of elementary instruction, of which the results are not so evident; and it is complete at twelve or fourteen years of age. A certificate that primary education is thus completed entitles anyone who desires further instruction to enter any *lycée* or *collège* in France. In these institutions, where boys and girls are kept apart, the instruction varies, according as the pupil prefers a literary or a scientific course of study. In either case, the instruction, which is remarkably thorough, lasts until the pupil is sixteen or eighteen years old. By that time he should be prepared for a considerable set of examinations, both written and oral, which are equivalent, in a general way, to those demanded for entrance to an American college of the better

sort; though, on the whole, I should suppose them to be rather more severe. In any event, they have the severity of an old-fashioned American entrance examination as distinguished from the flaccid recent method of allowing candidates for admission to college the privilege of taking a few examinations at a time; for the whole set must be passed at once. Duly passed, these examinations entitle the student to the degree of *bachelier* — in letters or in science, as the case may be.

This degree of *bachelier* is not, as degrees are with us, a matter only of record. It actually entitles the possessor to various rights which no one can have without it. It opens various civil careers, as well as various careers in the service of the government. And educationally it entitles people to present themselves anywhere in France for instruction under any of the faculties of higher education — letters, science, law, or medicine. At this point comes a very salient difference of the French university system from the English and our own. A faculty of letters is looked upon not as a guardian of general culture, but as a body in all respects as professional as a faculty of law. Only students who contemplate literary careers — such as the writing or the teaching of literature, history, or philosophy — are apt to

register themselves in the department of letters. Students who purpose devoting themselves to law or to medicine proceed with those subjects immediately. A course of study under any of the faculties of higher education normally takes some four years. At the end of this time a student should be ready for another set of examinations — broadly equivalent in letters to the standard required in England or in America for the degree of bachelor of arts. Like the examinations for the degree of *bachelier*, these must all be taken at once; and the resulting degree, in letters or in science, at all events, — the degree which our vagrant young ecclesiastics desired, — is that of *licencié*. *Licencié* or *licenciée*, I should rather say; for under all faculties of the higher education in France, men and women are received together on completely equal terms.

In the educational system this degree of *licencié* has supreme importance. Though a teacher may qualify for employment in primary schools by passing examinations designed for that special purpose, something like civil service examinations in England or in America, no one who has not taken the degree of *licencié* is allowed to teach in secondary schools. But this degree, which opens a career of secondary teaching, is not enough for a teacher whose ambition soars

higher. To take part in the higher education — in what we Americans are accustomed to call university teaching — he needs further credentials.

The next normal degree, like the highest regular degree almost everywhere, is that of doctor — of letters, of science, and so on. According to the French system, however, this degree demands exceptionally prolonged work. A successful candidate must present two original theses, one of which is usually in some other language than French. Both of these must be accepted as solid contributions to the department of learning in which he professes to excel; and at least the principal one must be a book of importance, not only in substance, but in scale and in style. The late Professor Beljame's well-known treatise on the "Public and Men of Letters in England during the Eighteenth Century," for instance, was one of the theses which earned him the degree of doctor of letters many years ago. And among the theses accepted at the Sorbonne within the last few years are the best studies in existence of Poe and of Hawthorne. The chance that I was American brought me the pleasure of personal acquaintance with the authors of these works — M. Lauvrière, who received the degree of doctor four or five years ago, and M. Dhaleine, who received it in 1905. The fact that neither

of these gentlemen was precisely young implied what is generally true of those who attain the highest French degree in letters. The work demanded for it can hardly be accomplished before a candidate is well past thirty years of age. The degree is actually granted, to all appearances, on the strength of theses, which are subjected to the closest scrutiny. Nominally, however, it is conferred only on candidates who have publicly defended their theses with success; and even though this process of defence be only a matter of form, it looks portentously serious.

On an appointed day the candidate for the doctorate in Paris presents himself in a large hall at the Sorbonne, something like a court-room, which will accommodate three or four hundred people. This is absolutely open to the public, who appear to value their privilege; for on the several occasions when I happened to attend such a ceremony, there were always a good many spectators. The candidate takes his seat at a desk facing a raised bench, which is occupied by the professors who have certified to the quality of the thesis he is to defend. Each of them is provided with a printed copy of the thesis; and during two or three hours they attack it in turn. The attack generally begins with words of cordial praise, which are followed, in due time, by every

adverse comment, general and detailed, which has presented itself to learned and ingenious critical minds. To these comments the candidate must instantly reply — intelligently, fluently, and in unimpeachable French. Generally he answers stoutly, though with extreme formal politeness; now and then — particularly when detected in some slight error of fact — he accepts the correction, with thanks, and mentions that he shall proceed to make it in the next edition of his work. Finally, at least in every case which came to my knowledge, his defence of the thesis is pronounced adequate, after a formal consultation of his examiners. And his labors are thereupon crowned with the degree of doctor, which entitles him to be employed, if he can secure the employment, as *maître de conférences* — that is, as instructor — in any institution of higher education, and which makes him eligible for appointment as professor in a faculty of the highest rank.

Meanwhile, as we have seen, he has inevitably got well toward middle life. Obviously it is desirable that competent people should occupy themselves in giving the higher instruction at an earlier age. To meet this difficulty a happy device exists. Any *licencié* is entitled to present himself at Paris for a special competitive exam-

ination in his chosen subject. The fact that this examination is held only at Paris emphasizes its importance. Though the degrees of Paris are generally held in so much higher esteem than others that most candidates for the doctorate go thither, the degree of doctor may regularly be conferred by any of the universities. This competitive examination, on the other hand, occurs nowhere else; and although it is open to candidates from any part of the country, it is so arduous that preparation for it in Paris is more than desirable. At least until very lately such preparation has been the special task of that admirable institution of the higher learning, the École Normale. Without some such expert training, even able men are rarely able to meet the test. A few years ago, for example, a candidate who had successfully passed the preliminary phases of this examination was summoned to appear, at a given hour, before a professor of the Sorbonne. This functionary handed him a paper, drawn at random from an urn. On this was written the title of some subject in the department with which the candidate was concerned. Precisely twenty-four hours later he was required to present to the same professor, at the same place, a complete written lecture on this subject, with due bibliographic notes. Some

such final test as this decides the question of success in a competitive examination where candidates present themselves in considerable numbers, and where only ten or fifteen per cent of them are accepted. These fortunate persons receive the degree of *agrégé*. This is so highly esteemed that, in practice, few who have not won it can hope for responsible employment even in secondary education. None without it, unless they become doctors, can instruct under the higher faculties. And it is so much harder to attain than any other French degree that it is really the most important. You will hardly find a professor anywhere who has not become an *agrégé* before he has proceeded, with due deliberation, to the regular degree of doctor, without which he cannot aspire to a full professorship in a faculty of letters, science, law, or medicine.

Such, in brief, was the university system in which, for the year following my kind friend's explanation of it, I was to hold an exceptional position. So far as degrees went — though I had the prudence not to mention the circumstance — I was only a Harvard bachelor of arts; I had never troubled myself with the task, practically superfluous at home, of studying for anything nominally higher. Yet, as a professor delegated from Harvard to lecture in France,

I was temporarily the equal of professors in the University of Paris, addressed by them as *collègue*, and by inferior university officials as *maître*. In order to regulate my behavior, it was necessary that I should understand my status, almost as if my position had been in a diplomatic system or a military. This was why my cordial colleague with the blackboard devoted the first hour of our intercourse to the lecture which I have tried to remember and to summarize. No friendly service could have been more opportune. Throughout my stay in France it threw constant light on my official relations and duties.

In France these duties were as regular as any teaching in class-room or laboratory. At all French universities — at least in the department of letters — two distinct kinds of instruction are invariably offered. One, precisely similar to that customary in our own country, consists of what are called *cours fermés* — that is, of exercises in class-rooms open only to registered students. The other consists of what are called *cours publics*. These courses of lay sermons, open, like divine service, to anyone who cares to hear them, are immemorially established in the academic custom of France, — being, as I conceive, a surviving trace of the instruction usual in the universities of the Middle Ages. And they

retain a kind of popularity much like that enjoyed among ourselves by the pulpit utterances of reputable preachers. That is, if a lecturer gives a public course acceptably, he is assured of considerable and intelligent audiences. Among these are a certain number of students, interested either in the subject discussed or in the personality of the lecturer. The greater part of the attendance, however, consists of people in no way connected with the university, including a good many women who come as a matter of curiosity, or occasionally of fashion. Yet this agreeable feature of such audiences in France is less salient than the number of mature men of serious intelligence who faithfully follow a course of public lectures. Such a course was the duty with which I was charged, both in Paris and later in the provinces.

This duty, meanwhile, involved others, of personal character, far more exacting than would have been the case at home. In the first place, I was bound to make official calls on my academic superiors — the rectors and the deans — at the earliest possible moment. In the second place, whenever I had the good fortune to be presented to an academic equal — a professor, a *collègue* — I was bound to leave my card at his door within twenty-four hours, on pain of being

held barbarously deficient in good manners. With people in a position of academic inferiority, on the other hand, these pleasant duties were less stringent.

Thus my actual knowledge of France began. Trying to play my part punctiliously, I was aided throughout by the punctilious kindness with which my superiors and my colleagues — and, indeed, everybody else — played theirs. The truth is that social intercourse anywhere is something like comedy; and that the French conduct the comedy of life more skilfully than we do. They know their cues, and lure you unawares into mastery of your own. In comparison, we Americans are like amateurs, stumbling through the good-natured confusion of impromptu charades.

Here and there the methods of the French universities seemed to me a little old-fashioned. One of the chief officials of the Sorbonne, for example, who received me with the greatest kindness, expressed a desire that during my stay in Paris I should enjoy every possible privilege; consequently, he went on to say, he had given directions that I should have access, whenever I chose, to the catalogue of the library. Without this advantage, it appeared, I should have been obliged, in case I desired a book, to ask an

attendant whether the library possessed it; or, in case I wished for authorities on any given subject, to request him at his convenience to make me a little bibliography. In various other places, I subsequently found out, — at the Collège de France, at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques, and doubtless elsewhere, — libraries of rather special range are at the disposal of scholars duly introduced. Generally speaking, however, books seem less accessible in France than you would expect; and consequently anyone who needs many finds that he must buy more than is the case at home.

When it came to the conduct of lectures, however, the arrangements were refreshingly pleasanter than anything which I had known before. A comfortable little room is at the disposal of the lecturer, where he is expected to arrive, in frock coat and black cravat, a few minutes before the hour named for his public appearance. At precisely the hour in question, an impressive being in dress clothes, with a silver chain about his neck, presents himself, holding a tray on which are a glass, a spoon, a decanter of water, and a saucer containing a few lumps of sugar. With these in hand, he precedes the lecturer to the platform of the hall where the audience is already assembled. He places the

sugar and water on the desk, — and, as I did not personally have recourse to this refreshment, it is possible that the ingredients remained unchanged from November till March, — and he withdraws for an hour. At precisely the end of the hour, the *appariteur*, as this functionary is called, reappears at the little door behind the platform. You thereupon bring your lecture to a close. Whether he have authority, in other event, to remove you forcibly I never ventured to inquire. At New Year's time I gave him five francs, by the counsel of one of my colleagues, who represented that he would be displeased with less and disconcerted with more.

In the little waiting-room, both before and after lectures, I was free to receive anyone whom I chose. The *appariteur* served as watch-dog, duly warning away people without credentials, and politely intimating to me the character of any who had them. Thus I came to meet a certain number of students interested in what I was discussing. Here, at once, I found myself in an unfamiliar atmosphere. Whoever has had much to do with American students must agree, I think, that their abundant energy is apt to exert itself in other fields than those where they are brought into professional contact with their

teachers. French students seem of different stripe. They are alertly intelligent, serious to a degree which shames you into consciousness of comparative frivolity, intellectually energetic beyond reproach; but somehow, when you have been habituated to academic intercourse at home, they seem a shade inhuman. One can soon see why. It is not that they lack humanity; in private life, they are said to maintain the convivial tradition of ancestral France. But humanity and work are separate things; and to them university work is a really critical matter. They are not playing through three or four years which shall ripen them into something sweeter than they might grow to be without this happy interval between the drudgery of school and the strife of responsible existence; they are assiduously preparing themselves for a career of intense competition. Their spirit seems quite to lack the amateurish grace so engagingly characteristic of American undergraduates; in contrast, they seem intensely, startlingly professional.

In the best sense of this abused term, no doubt. It is not that French students impress you as disposed to trickery or subterfuge. It is only that, in their whole relation to university work, they take for granted that they are occupied not in the acquisition of that vague thing

which we call "culture," but in a very palpable phase of the struggle for existence. Their business, as students, is to inform themselves as widely and as accurately as possible; and above all, to gather their information in some comprehensive and comprehensible system. That is why they are at the university; and they are generally enrolled under the faculty of letters, because they aspire, in due time, to become members of such a faculty, if possible ultimately in Paris. So far as my observation went, there is nothing at any French university which takes the place of undergraduate life in England or in America. The only incident in my experience which promised an exception to this rule turned out to prove it. At a provincial university some students invited me to what I supposed to be some such entertainment as is given by the dramatic clubs of American colleges. In one sense it was; the variety performance in question was blamelessly commonplace. The actors, however, were not students, but professionals — male and female — hired for the occasion. And what the students had to do with it, beyond forming part of the audience, I could not make out. They did not even seem to know one another personally. The relation of any French student to his teachers or to his fellows, in short,

may be cordially friendly, or it may quite lack human quality. The situation is like what would exist at home between fellow-practitioners of a profession.

In some of the institutions not directly under my observation, I was given to understand, — particularly at the École Normale, — a stronger feeling of comradeship exists. Even there, however, this comradeship is based on a common professional purpose and on eager and honorable competition. From beginning to end the higher phase of education in France has a different function from that to which American tradition accustoms us. Technically, the French training is better; in some respects, despairingly so. For it is not only intensely earnest; it so admirably combines precision with generalization — accurate attention to detail with constant effort to keep general principles in mind — that it seems much more vital than any other training which has come to my knowledge. But, on the other hand, an American boy, no matter how careless of his studies, who has passed three or four years at college, will find himself as a human being the better for life in consequence — the more sympathetic, the richer in human quality. Which is really why our American reverence for our colleges is so wholesome. This human quality

seemed quite lacking in the university life of France.

To some extent, this impression remains true when you turn from students to professors. In general, the professors of the French universities are not only sound and accomplished scholars; they are men who have acquired considerable knowledge of the world, men of social tact, men of animated charm in private life. But in their professional character they are as serious as if there were no such thing as pleasure on earth. Though they are less burdened than we with routine teaching, they may never relax their effort to extend and solidify their learning. None of my previous experience had revealed to me anything like such a spectacle of concentrated and unceasing intellectual activity as seemed a matter of course among my temporary colleagues at Paris. Foreign prejudice is apt to suppose the French light-hearted, frivolous, and at best superficial. When you live among French men of learning engaged in the work of their lives, you begin to wonder whence this grotesque misconception arose. For nobody could imagine industry more unremitting than theirs, and, for all its cheerfulness, more intense.

Professional, again, is the word which comes to mind. Just as the student life of France lacks

the human quality which goes far to justify the shortcomings of American students, so the life of a professor in France lacks the social element which admirably pervades the universities of England, and is not unknown among ourselves. At least in Paris there seems little necessary personal relation among these busy fellow-workers. They know each other, of course, and if they chance to find each other congenial, they may be bound by close ties of friendship; but such a state of things seems no more a matter of course than it would be among members of the bar or practising physicians. Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of what I mean is the punctilious politeness with which they always treat one another. My first impression was that the formal courtesy which they invariably showed me, as a visitor, indicated a shade of difference between my position and the more intimate relation which must probably exist among themselves. The longer I stayed in France, the more convinced I became that this impression was mistaken. I was in a world, I discovered, where learning is not an accomplishment, but an honorable and arduous profession, with all its trials, all its heart-burning competition, all its pitiless disdain of weakness, all its stimulating rewards.

The normal career of a French professor, in general, is somewhat as follows: Almost from the time when he enters a secondary school, he contemplates the profession to which he shall devote his life. Certainly by the time when he becomes a *bachelier*, his purpose is determined. At the university he devotes himself assiduously to the subject which he proposes to master. Once equipped with the degree of *licencié*, he is eligible for employment as a teacher in some secondary school. If in need of support, he is apt to take up this work for a while; if more fortunate, he is more likely to proceed at once to higher study, usually under the direction of the most eminent specialists in Paris. In either event, unless circumstances prove benumbing, he prepares himself, with unflagging energy, for the competitive examination which may win him the degree of *agrégé*. This achieved, he is eligible for appointment as professor in any secondary school, or as a lecturer — *maître de conférences* — under any faculty of the higher education. Before he can become full professor in such a faculty he must wait for his doctorate; of this, however, he can be pretty confident, in due time. The laggards have been left behind.

Accordingly, he becomes as soon as possible professor in the chief *lycée* of some university

centre, and offers courses of instruction under the faculty to which he is attached. His first appointment is usually rather remote from Paris — the centre of the system and the goal of his ambition. He is sent, to prove his quality, somewhere in the provinces. There, for various reasons, he may perhaps remain; and wherever he is he works hard and well. Anyone who has glanced at the title-pages of serious French books must be impressed by the quality of those which frequently proceed from teachers in what seem obscure and outlying regions. In every case, however, he hopes for promotion, which means not so much advancement in local rank — though this, of course, counts for something — as appointment to a position nearer Paris.

This state of affairs was brought vividly to my notice at several provincial universities. In one instance I found a distinguished professor of history receiving hearty congratulations on all sides. Beyond question the most eminent local antiquarian who had ever written about the deeply interesting region which he had inhabited for twenty years, he had just been called to a chair at the Collège de France, in Paris — an institution supplementary to the Sorbonne, where the instruction is of the highest order, and the body of instructors of the highest distinction.

There was not an instant of hesitation or of doubt that he would proceed at once from the city which had so long been his home — and where, for one thing, every detail of local genealogy for a thousand years was on the tip of his tongue — to surroundings where, personally, he would be almost as strange as I. In Paris, furthermore, his professional dignity would be far less instantly obvious than in the city he was about to leave; at best, he would be lost to sight there, in the crowd of other than learned human energy which infests every great capital. Yet, so far as I could perceive, he felt no shade of such sentimental regret as, under similar circumstances, would have arisen in the mind of an American professor thus called from the habitual surroundings of half a lifetime. And among his colleagues, much as they would surely miss both his eminent teaching and his winning personality, I could detect no shade of resentment. They seemed unanimous in their sentiment of generous good-will — much as men might seem at home if a favorite colleague should receive an honorary degree.

At another university of considerable importance, I found the Rector in the act of packing up his library. He had had the good fortune to be called to the office of Inspector-General — or

some such matter — in the Ministry of Public Instruction. It transpired that this promotion came not long after his last, which had been from the rectorship of another university, some hours farther from Paris, by a less direct line. In this former position he had distinguished himself by infusing into a somewhat languid institution of learning a degree of vitality which had caused it to be widely recognized. When called nearer to Paris, however, he had felt no compunction in abandoning his nursling to a successor, who was at that moment preparing to follow him to the higher rectorship which he was about to vacate. And when, somewhat later, I visited the university from which these two Rectors had been successively promoted, I found it under the rectorship of a somewhat subdued gentleman, at once gratified to be at the head of a university and depressed to be sent thither from the capital, where his previous academic status had been subordinate.

The grounds on which promotions are made are undoubtedly complicated. Sound scholarship, brilliant publication, efficient teaching, count for much. Personal qualities count for something; and so, at times, do political and religious considerations. During the Empire, I have been told, a professor of doubtful orthodoxy was apt

to have little favor; and during the period when the government of the Republic has been engaged in disestablishing the Church obvious devotion to the Catholic faith has not been thought wholly favorable to academic advancement. In any event, the question turns, to great degree, on those inexorable *dossiers* in the Ministry at Paris. Once or twice a year, the Director of Higher Education summons all the rectors of France to a meeting at the Ministry; there, I believe, the inspectors meet them, more or less officially. There, no doubt, the *dossiers* are inspected and completed. And on what happens there, I suppose, depends what happens to hundreds of anxious scholars throughout France.

Until one fully understands this centralization it is not quite easy to explain two remarkable features of French provincial universities: the surprisingly high quality of the instruction, and the benumbing lack of local tradition or sentiment. Under a system so strongly competitive as that which prevails in France, a man who attains the dignity of membership in any faculty of the higher education must not only possess a vigorous mind highly trained, but also must exert his powers unremittingly. Though accidents may postpone or prevent his promotion, indefinitely or permanently, nothing short of

despair can destroy his hopes of it. So you can go nowhere in France without finding men whose talents and accomplishments, never suffered to rust, would be admirable anywhere. I am tempted to say that there is not a single centre of the higher education in France where a foreign student might not pass a year of stimulating work with great advantage. And so long as any professor is officially attached to the staff of any university, however remote, he conscientiously does all he can to advance the interests of that institution, as distinguished from its fellows and its rivals. I have more than once used the word *professional* to express the temper of French learning. A better word might have been *conscientious.*

All the conscience in the world, however, cannot make the intellect identical with the heart. And just as one feels among the students of Paris a startling lack of that sense of fellowship which makes the graduates of any American college comrades for life, and almost justifies the rowdy cheers of our athletic meetings, so throughout the provincial universities one feels that there is no trace of what often seems most lastingly valuable in the higher education of America — spontaneous college feeling. Any American will tell you, first of all, the college he comes from.

A Frenchman seems hardly to remember where he studied — as distinguished from what he studied, and under whom. For in French universities the only business of students or of teachers is study. And learning is the same everywhere; it is not a question of local atmosphere. And every Frenchman who devotes his life to university work has the same goal in view — Paris, if he can attain it; if not, some station on the road thither.

When I began to realize these conditions, the circumstances of my visits to provincial universities grew clearer. In Paris I had been received as a temporary colleague by cordial French professors who had reached the summit of their professional ambition. To the provinces I came not only as a foreign visitor whom chance had converted into a temporary colleague; I came also as a man who had enjoyed for a little while the honor for which my colleagues most eagerly longed — an official appointment at the Sorbonne. It was partly this, I think, which made my welcome in the provinces somewhat more formal — I had almost said more ceremonious — than it had been in Paris. Partly, however, this phase of my provincial experience was probably due to other causes.

One of these was doubtless the traditional

rigidity of provincial manners, pleasantly touched on throughout French literature. Another may be found in the relation of provincial universities to their immediate surroundings. The university of Paris, though positively of the highest importance and dignity, is obscured by the metropolitan life which surrounds it. You might live in Paris for half a lifetime without realizing that there are such things as professors or students in the world. Throughout the provinces, on the other hand, every university is a conspicuous fact in the city where it happens to be seated. As more obvious, it is inevitably more self-conscious; and as more self-conscious, it is naturally somewhat more formal — less apt to assume itself a part of the world which lives and moves around it.

At the time when I was in France, furthermore, the condition of politics gave all the universities a complexion evident even in Paris and almost startlingly obvious in the provinces. They were government institutions; and the government was prosecuting a policy which presented itself to many Catholic minds as nothing less than a persecution of the Church. A somewhat embarrassing predicament followed. However the regular staff of a provincial university might appear in the eyes of neighbors to whom its

members were personally familiar, a foreign professor who came to discourse in a foreign language on a subject not regularly included in university programmes was inevitably presumed to be radical in sympathy, and was therefore an object of suspicion to conservative or reactionary people.

This was particularly evident at Lille — the first of the provincial universities on my programme. The richer people of that great manufacturing city are such ardent Catholics that they support a considerable Catholic university by their gifts. The city, furthermore, is close to the frontier of Belgium, where some of the Catholic orders, forbidden to carry on their schools in France, have taken refuge. Accordingly, the clerical prejudices of Lille appeared to involve pretty strong dislike for any teaching officially sanctioned by an anticlerical government. This did not mean, however, either that many members of the regular faculties were not good Catholics or even that the Catholic religion was not officially taught in the secondary schools. Almost the first object which met my eyes during a visit to the Lycée of Lille — a very large and efficient institution — was the excellent priest who was in charge of the religious training there. He was a regular member of the teaching staff; he lived in the buildings, and acted, I believe,

not only as an orthodox teacher of religion, but also as spiritual adviser to the several hundred Catholic boys in attendance at the school. In the cases of Protestant or Jewish boys, religious instruction was likewise provided by the authorities. Even under this extremely anticlerical government, it proved, there was a degree of dogmatic teaching at the expense of the state which would not be tolerated by the public opinion of any city in America.

The phase of religious education legally suppressed a year or two ago, in short, was not the teaching of tenets and principles. It was the control of secondary education by teaching orders of ecclesiastics, who established successful and fashionable schools in rivalry with the *lycées* of the regular university system, and there fitted pupils to pass the regular examinations for the degree of *bachelier*. The influence of these schools, conducted by monks and nuns, was held to be unfavorable to republican principles, as well as to due freedom of thought on the part of pupils in matters not directly concerned with religion. As one Catholic of my acquaintance put the case to me, he had acquiesced with regret in the suppression of the teaching orders, for the reason that he could see no other means of saving France from the condition of Spain.

Into the actual range and nature of the religious instruction at the state schools, I did not inquire. The quality of the secular instruction there seemed to me extraordinarily high. It happened, for example, that I was taken into a class-room where a lesson in English was being given to some French boys of sixteen, mostly the sons of operatives. The exercise was conducted in excellent English, which the pupils seemed to speak almost as readily as the teacher; and the point under discussion when I visited the class was one which would have puzzled Harvard freshmen. It was the distinction in meaning between the words *priest* — a Catholic ecclesiastic; *clergyman* — an Anglican; and *minister* — a dissenter. At another provincial *lycée* I was welcomed by the performance of an English play, in blank verse, the style of which — a modern imitation of Elizabethan diction — is extremely involved. The pronunciation of the young actors left something to be desired. On the other hand, the longer I listened to them the more deeply I was surprised at the intelligence with which they had mastered the meaning of passage after passage which might well have perplexed boys to whom the English language was native. In American schools, or rather in the results of the instruction there afforded, I have

never come across the teaching of any foreign language which compared in efficiency with the teaching of English in secondary schools throughout France. And, to all appearances, this was only one example of the thoroughness and the vitality of French teaching in all its branches.

Of primary-school work I saw nothing whatever, except such results of it as should be evident to any traveller. The most obvious of these is the general accuracy with which people of the working class speak and write their own language. Another is the remarkably robust and wholesome look of school-children. Statistics are said to give disquieting figures concerning the birth-rate in France. The casual observation of a traveller, on the other hand, would lead to the conclusion that there is no country where children are better cared for. The puny squalor of childhood, familiar to any eye in England or America, in Germany or Italy, or almost anywhere else, is hardly to be found among the French. And a comical evidence of how much this is due to the management of primary education may be found in the extraordinary personal neatness of French school-children during the months when school is in session, as distinguished from their normally juvenile carelessness of aspect in vacation.

Yet even in school-days, both primary and secondary, this thoroughness, this obvious efficiency of work, seems, on the whole, to have been purchased at the price of imperfect conviviality. Conviviality, after all, in the literal sense of the word, is among the most enduring elements of the traditional and comparatively inefficient systems of education to which we of America, like our English cousins, have been accustomed. We remember our school-mates more vividly than our teachers or than what they taught or failed to teach us. To put the matter most generally, the emotional and the sentimental life of our youthful years surges in memory and in effect above the intellectual and the technical. Trivial, frivolous, though such a confession may sound, it is not really so at the core. The whole process of our education is indirect. We are exposed to certain influences, of which the ultimate results make us what we grow to be; and what we grow to be enables us to do what we can. In comparison, the whole system of French education, with its strenuous directness of method and of achievement, can hardly help impressing an American as somewhat deficient in human sympathy.

The intense, centralized, competitive system by which all instructors are selected, and to which

all the students are submitting themselves, maintains meanwhile professional standards higher than ours. I recall a remarkable instance of this. Chancing to enter the library of a professor of Sanskrit, I noticed open on his table a book of which the characters looked so different from what I remembered of Sanskrit texts that I asked whether French scholars used a different Sanskrit alphabet from that prevalent in America. He smiled at my deplorable ignorance and explained that the text in question was not Sanskrit, but Chinese. In answer I regretted that I had not been aware that he was engaged in the teaching of Chinese as well. He was not, he said very simply; but in the course of his Sanskrit work he had to touch on Buddhist doctrine. And you can no more discuss Buddhism, he went on to say, without studying the standard Chinese commentaries thereon than you can discuss Christian theology without reference to the Byzantine fathers. So far as I could perceive, both of these propositions impressed him as axiomatic. So far as my observation of our own scholarly attainments has gone, both of them would have seemed, among ourselves, rather utopian.

The general character of this scholar's temper, the while, was deeply impressive to any American.

You might have expected such a student to have been lost in his books, or at best to have limited his energies to matters of indisputable accuracy — to the collection and verification of fact. Instead, the better one knew him the more one was impressed with the dynamic quality of his mental habit. For a fact as a fact he cared as little as if pedantry had never obscured the world. His impulse — it would misrepresent the characteristic to call it his effort — was to use every fact in his possession as part of some system. With all his learning, his intellect was as active as if it bore no burden. What to others might have been a burden, indeed, seemed in his case rather a stimulus.

In this respect he was not peculiar among his colleagues throughout France. The more I saw of them, the more I was confirmed in my belief that American learning would be greatly strengthened if more of our graduate students came under French influence. The influence of German scholarship on American during the past ninety years has been admirable, but perhaps excessive. It has taught us a respect for fact and method which our earlier learning lacked. It has tended at the same time to encourage the notion that the object and end of all learning is the methodical collection of fact. No one would

for an instant pretend this error to be prevalent among the higher minds of Germany. Few can deny that it is apt to possess the minds of Americans who, having studied in Germany, come home no longer American, nor yet soundly German. The elder influence of English scholarship in America, the while, has tended rather to the sustenance of tradition than to the recognition of newer learning; and thus perhaps to rather attenuated pedantry. The unmixed influence of France might perhaps tend toward premature philosophizing. To this danger, however, the scholarly minds of America seem at present very little exposed. Could our graduate students who purpose devoting their lives to teaching come into more frequent contact with the combined industry and intelligence of modern French scholarship, the American universities of the future might be at once more solid in attainment and more stimulating in atmosphere than now seems quite likely.

On the other hand, as we have seen more than once, even though such students might derive the greatest benefit from the dynamic mental habit so strong throughout France, they would find there no such love for the regions where learning lingers as makes gracious, in a way all their own, the great universities of England and

the elder colleges of America which have grown from our colonial traditions. The French are not deficient in sentiment. No one can know them even from their literature, or from the most superficial travel, — still more, no one can come to know them as personal friends, — without recognizing the deep, spontaneous genuineness of their emotional nature. This phase of their temperament as a nation is more pronounced, if possible, than the admirable intellectual one on which our consideration of the French universities has touched. Rather paradoxically, however, it is less evident in their educational surroundings and systems than almost anywhere else.

II

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

IT was not long before the nature of my academic mission began to reveal the French to me in other aspects than the professional one on which we have been dwelling. As the first American lecturer at the French Universities, I was expected to enter into personal relations with as many as possible of those who for any reason felt interest in strengthening sympathy between their country and ours. Meanwhile, my official status in the university system gave me, for the moment, a definite position in the extremely systematic official society of France. These facts compelled me both in Paris and elsewhere to present myself not only to people whom I met officially, but also to those with whom, by letters of introduction or by other chance, I was brought into personal contact.

Whether the origin of my acquaintance with French people was official or private, it regularly began in the same way. You leave your card at the door of the person on whom you wish to

call, and there it is taken in charge by that peculiarly French functionary — the *concierge*. At least in Paris, French people generally live in large houses, containing a number of apartments with a common entrance and staircase. Close to the entrance door, on the level of the street, are some stuffy little rooms inhabited by the *concierge* — or porter — with his family. Their duty, among other things, is to keep strict watch on whoever goes in or out; and at least one of them, often the porter's wife or half-grown daughter, is always at hand. The chief peculiarity of their temperament seems to be insatiable appetite. At whatever hour of day or evening you confront a *concierge*, you are sure to find somebody eating or just risen from table; and the atmosphere inhabited by this bustling personage seems immortally laden with the fumes of something recently boiled. No matter whether you call on a friend who lives in some unpretentious, out-of-the-way place or on one who inhabits a palace, the *concierge* is always about the same. You can detect little difference between those in charge of important doors and of insignificant; they are as like as house flies. Of course, you occasionally come across private houses, with regular domestic servants such as you would find anywhere. But these, grand or simple, are so

unusual that you remember the *concierge* as standing between you and further human intercourse throughout France.

In response to your card, which the *concierge* duly sees delivered, comes his master's card, often with some cordial words of greeting written on it, or perhaps with a friendly note. If this acknowledgment of your existence contains an intimation of when your French acquaintance may be found at home, either habitually or for your special benefit, you make your second visit at the appointed time; and thus enter into real personal relations. Otherwise, your intercourse has limited itself to a polite exchange of cards. Generally speaking, you never expect or attempt to see French people socially except when they have asked you to one of their regular days of reception or have made a definite appointment. To call in person at any other time — to do more than leave your card with the *concierge* — would be an intrusive pretence to intimacy.

When you are really received in a French house — of whatever rank — you are conscious, at first, of a certain formality, or at least of a certain precision of conduct somewhat foreign to our usages. But you soon grow to feel that this is not a bit invidious. It means only that the social customs of France are more punctilious

than ours. You must observe them carefully, if you would have the reward of social kindness. Observance of them brings, in return, a welcome which could nowhere be surpassed in hospitality.

A characteristic instance of what I have in mind may be observed at almost any French dinner-party. Instead of sitting at the ends of the table, where they are as far apart as physical conditions will permit, the host and the hostess sit opposite one another in the middle, where the table is narrowest, and where they are able at once to keep in touch with each other, and easily to talk with three guests on either side of each. Thus a company of twelve is at once brought into a single social group, and the outlying members of a larger party are not so far away but that they can readily listen to the general talk, or even take part in it. And the talk is always general — addressed, no doubt, to one or another of the company, as the tact of the hosts happens to find pleasantest; but never broken into a system of separate dialogues, as is generally the case at home. A French dinner is not noisy, any more than a French drawing-room is; but in either case the deeply subdued tone of voice prevalent in England and among the better sort of Americans would be almost a breach of polite manners. Every social function

in France, you grow to feel, even to the most informal, has a social character far more pronounced than we are used to in America. The individual is there to enjoy himself; but he is also there to play his part. In consequence, all social intercourse in France has a quality less personal, less confidential, somewhat more reserved than an American is used to. Whoever, even in private places, finds himself in the presence of fellow-beings, conducts himself in many ways as if he were in public. The French are in no way conscious of this phase of their manners. To them it is as normal as it is novel to an American visitor; and it results in a general and cheerful, though not quite intimate conviviality which makes our own manners seem somewhat melancholy in their dual isolation.

Another detail of French custom soon became evident to me. In any company where the talk is thus general whoever is present may take part; there is no need of any other personal introduction to a fellow-guest than the fact that you find yourselves, for the moment, under a friend's roof; but there is no need of regarding the acquaintance as more than momentary. If, as a visitor, however, you are presented by name to any of the French people present — particularly at a dinner-party — you are rather expected to recog-

nize the courtesy by leaving your card at this new friend's door within twenty-four hours, and so referring to him the choice of whether the acquaintance shall persist. In such cases, of course, various questions of tact may arise. The simplest way of settling them is to take some occasion of mentioning to your hostess the pleasure you have found in meeting these delightful people. If, in her opinion, they expect you to call, she will incidentally tell you where they live. If she does not afford you this information there is some reason to infer that you need not pursue the matter. A foreigner at first presses this sort of question more directly, and is most kindly and frankly answered. It is in better accordance with French tradition, however, to ask and to learn incidentally, as it were; and after a while you grow French enough in sympathy to feel that your earlier impulse of inquiry was almost rustically crude.

In the society which I thus came pleasantly to know, my position proved as exceptional as that which I enjoyed for the moment in the French universities. Visitors to France, like foreign visitors to our own or any other country, generally find themselves there in some fairly distinct social surroundings. Americans, for instance, are apt to be received, according to

circumstances and position, by diplomatic or fashionable or artistic circles. These they sometimes grow to know pretty intimately. It is far from usual, however, that an American should at once have considerable access to French society, and not be confined to some particular phase of it. Yet this was precisely my situation. My academic mission was addressed to no one kind of French people, — official, learned, artistic, financial, or commercial; Christian, Jewish, or pagan; distinguished by the graces of fashion, or indifferent to such vanities. It was addressed equally to all. My welcome duty was to cultivate cordial intercourse, on the most friendly terms, with reputable people of every shade — many of them by no means disposed to be on friendly terms with each other. So far as lay in my power, I must identify myself with no single phase of the confused life of modern France, however that phase might attract my sympathy; I must be at one with all its phases, however likely some of them might have been, at a less critical moment, to excite my prejudice. I did my best, with all my heart; and I have been rewarded by sentiments of enduring friendship very wide in social range.

In the nature of things, however, my acquaintance had its centre in the universities. The uni

versity officers with whom I was brought into professional contact were among the first of the friends who received me unofficially as a human being. One and all of them had passed through the various stages of the rigid educational system at which we have glanced together. All had attained some degree of distinction in the profession of learning. In the university hierarchy each had his precise place, which involved, of course, a certain degree of recognition in official society — a status, on strictly formal occasions, something like that which would anywhere exist in the case of military or naval officers. In the general relations of private life, on the other hand, the social circumstances of these university officials were controlled, as would be the case anywhere, by more personal considerations. And these were perhaps more evident in France than they might have been elsewhere, for the reasons that the structure of French society remains rather rigid, and that university life there is so professional a matter that it has hardly any of the convivial character which marks university life in England, and to some degree in America as well.

My colleagues, accordingly, varied widely in their social relations, according to their origin, their disposition, and their fortune. A few were

of aristocratic type; a few were able and honorable men who had risen, by force of ability and industry, from the common people. Most of them, however, though not forming, in their quality of professors, a class apart, proved to be living much as their fathers and their grandfathers had lived before them — to be continuing and sustaining the general social traditions in which they had been born and bred. And when men of this kind, whatever their condition of fortune or the scale of their households, fell to speaking of themselves and of their friends, they used a word which foreigners are apt completely to misapprehend. As simply as Englishmen in similar circumstances describe themselves as of the middle class, these French friends of mine spoke of themselves as *bourgeois*.

Despite our fondness for democratic commonplace, we Americans are apt to have a weakness which makes us fancy this term — like its English equivalent — to be invidious. Our classic conviction that all men are created equal assumes in its social aspect a peculiar form; it contents itself on everybody's part with a dogmatic denial of social superiority. Every American believes that he should derogate from his personal dignity if he did not assume and assert himself to be as good as the best anywhere. By

no means all of us stop to consider the conclusions obviously involved in this conviction. If we are as good as the best, it follows as the light the day that those who are not of the best are not so good as we. Wherefore any foreigner who frankly acknowledges himself secondary to any other is apt to impress us as secondary to ourselves. The result is often comical — at least in the eyes of the foreigners concerned, who cannot perceive why a good Yankee who has made an honest fortune should share the aristocratic prejudice of societies which regard the fact that a man is engaged in business as a reason why he should not be invited to dinner. But there is no doubt that your stout Yankee does so, which has a good deal to do with the artless preference of American girls who marry abroad for husbands who, whatever their personal merits, are duly equipped with titles. Accordingly, we Americans are given to innocent wonder as to how self-respecting Englishmen can admit themselves to belong to the middle class — which involves admission that a class in existence is superior. And when it comes to the analogous French term *bourgeois*, we find it so far from congenial that you need not listen long to hear Americans using it as contumeliously as if we were all dukes and peers.

For this prejudice of ours there is an obvious reason, not generally remarked. Our impressions of French society are almost always indirect. They are derived either from accounts of it furnished by compatriots who have enjoyed the privilege of seeing it with greater or less intimacy, or else from books written by the French themselves. In general, our compatriots who have seen French life belong to one of four classes: diplomatists, artists, people of some pretence to fashion, and residents in the American colony of Paris. All four of these classes observe French society from angles not favorable to *bourgeois* sympathy. Diplomatists have their own special world, closely related to the actual possessors of political power everywhere, and accustomed — whatever the personal origin of its members — to share the sentiments as well as to assist in the functions of sovereignty, whose concern with the middle classes has a quality of benevolent patronage. American artists cultivate and rather exaggerate the distaste for humdrum and thrifty virtues which has always animated the temper of Europeans devoted to the fine arts. Pretenders to fashion would sacrifice this meaning of their existence — so far as it has any — if they did not echo the commonplaces of the noble society to which they ingenu-

ously aspire. And "colonists," particularly if their personal acquaintance with the French is limited, preserve their self-respect by excessively cherishing the conventional opinions which flourish at home. Americans in France, accordingly, whether diplomatic, artistic, fashionable, or colonial, are very apt to speak of *bourgeois* — people of whom their knowledge is usually external — as of inferior beings.

When it comes to the impressions of France which we derive from French writers, the case proves similar. Broadly speaking, these writers are of two classes. The first, and the elder, consists of those writers of memoirs who have so long ornamented French literature; the second, and more modern, consists of the novelists and dramatists whose work has been so plenteous and so admirable during the last hundred years. In general, the writers of memoirs have been aristocrats, with all the limitations of their class; in general, the writers of novels and plays have been eminent personages in the world of fine art, with equally pronounced limitations of a somewhat different complexion. The one point in which the sentiments of these classes regularly agree happens to be that both regard the *bourgeoisie* externally and with imperfect cordiality. Accordingly, our French accounts of *bourgeois*

character are apt to harmonize with those furnished us by compatriots. They present it to us as on the whole sordid, uninteresting, and vulgar; at best they dispose us to regard it as what the cant of a few years ago used to call Philistine.

Hampered with such inevitable prepossessions as these influences involve, I was somewhat startled by the assurance with which so many of my French friends spoke of themselves as *bourgeois*. To their minds the term evidently suggested nothing which involved the smallest sacrifice of self-respect. The word seemed to them no more invidious than the word *Yankee* would seem to an honest gentleman of Boston. It implied only what any candid man is willing to admit anywhere — a simple statement of incontestable fact. In any society which has reached the state of civilized organization there must always be various kinds of people. In most countries there have been more or less acknowledged governing classes — priestly, military, bureaucratic, noble, and the like. In all societies there have inevitably been laboring classes. In all healthy societies there have been classes between the two. Such classes exist to-day in England and in France, extending from everybody engaged in the learned professions, in

finance, or in commerce, to the smallest shopkeepers. In England such people call themselves of the middle class; in France they call themselves *bourgeois*. That is the whole story.

It would be the whole story, at least, for anybody but ourselves of America. The accidents of our political and social history have prevented the growth in our country of any rigid class system. In consequence, our professional men and our chief men of business, flourishing in regions where no military or landed aristocracy has kept their aspirations in check, have been apt to develop, together with the sound middle-class virtues necessary to their existence anywhere else, a rather unusual degree of that wholesome self-confidence which is among the stronger virtues of foreigners of rank. To be sure, this has never resulted in anything like acknowledged hereditary dignities. Yet anyone who understands the actual structure of American society, past or present, must admit, even among our republican selves, the existence — at any given time — of certain distinguishable social classes. We have always had fellow citizens whose circumstances have allowed them a range of freedom not open to those who were less able or less fortunate. We have always had our leaders of the professions, in former times perhaps more

secure of general esteem than has been the case since the Civil War. We have always had our honorable men of wealth, rather more conspicuous in our recent period of national expansion and prosperity than they used to be in simpler times. At the other end of the social scale, we have always had our laboring classes, as well. Between these two extremes there have always existed other classes, not so fortunate as the one, more so than the other. The flexibility of our system has prevented these worthy people from admitting to themselves precisely the position they perforce occupy. Yet obviously it is neither so influential as that of some compatriots nor so submerged as that of others. Like that of both the other kinds of people, meanwhile, it is completely compatible with self-respect and with edifying conduct of life. The fact that we have no accepted name for this social situation doubtless reveals a sensitive weakness in our national temper; but it cannot disguise, even from ourselves in honest moments, that most of us, and most of our acquaintance, are neither "captains of industry" nor "knights of labor." And all that the term middle class implies in England, or the term *bourgeois* in France, is that such a class, inevitable in any civilized society, has the candor to acknowledge its existence. The char-

acteristic vice of middle-class people is doubtless vulgarity; but this no more means that, as a class, the *bourgeois* are vulgar than the fact of any other characteristic vice comprises the whole character of the class which it tends to weaken. One might as soon pretend that all aristocracy is heartlessly insolent, all art shamelessly licentious, all capital cynically rapacious, all labor stupidly brutal.

So far from comprehensively characteristic, indeed, is the occasional vulgarity of the French *bourgeoisie*, that anyone who should approach them without prepossession would hardly perceive it for himself. His first impression would rather be of the quality which is implied in the very frankness with which they describe themselves as *bourgeois*. He could hardly fail to recognize, with admiration, the genuine simplicity of their temper, their cheerful readiness to admit the circumstances of their lives and to adapt their lives to their circumstances, without a touch of either pretentiousness or false shame. If they entertain him in their homes, for example, they do so according to their means. Very likely, they make an occasion of his visit; if they failed to, they would be falling into the pretentiousness of making believe that such visits occurred every day, or into the still worse pretentiousness of

neglecting hospitality. But a man whose means are limited, and whose daily life is simple, would never dream of making the circumstances of your reception inharmonious with the surroundings in which he receives you. Everyone has his own scale of life, prudently adapted as a rule to the means at his command. Everyone lives and entertains accordingly.

The next impression of a candid visitor might well be that these new friends are remarkable for intellectual honesty. Of course they have their prejudices; if they had not they would lack one of the most profoundly attractive qualities of human nature. And in various ways their prejudices may not readily coincide with your own. You can never resent, however, the honesty with which these Frenchmen cherish their opinions, nor fail to respect the courteous fearlessness with which they express them. Some concern manners; some concern convictions — social, religious, political — with which you are not familiar; some obviously result from limitations of environment, distinctly different from the perhaps equal limitations to which you have been subjected at home. But however limited a Frenchman's range of vision may sometimes appear, you will never find it inconsistent with a stimulating degree of intellectual activity. The French

mind is alert and logical; otherwise French society and French universities, to go no further, could not persist so systematically as they do. And this alert and logical habit is quite as obvious a factor as any phase of prejudice in the candor with which the *bourgeois*, of whatever shade, consider both the details of their daily affairs and any questions which chance to arise for discussion. The pervasive frugality and thrift of French life is implicit evidence of the intellectual sincerity I have in mind. More stirring evidence of it anyone would find in talk with the French which should rise to the dignity of an exchange of ideas. Cherishing their prepossessions as premises, Frenchmen will unpretentiously endeavor either to reconcile any new suggestion with their systems, or else to prove the suggestion mistaken, in fact or in reasoning. As marked as their virtue of simplicity is that of the honesty with which they confront the circumstances and the problems of earthly perplexity.

Meanwhile, a third quality, of inspiring strength, could hardly fail to impress you. This is one which any visitor to the universities must already have felt in the character and the conduct of both teachers and students — cheerful and unremitting industry in the serious work

of life. On the surface, perhaps, the French still preserve something of the gayety which has made foreigners suppose them to be agreeably frivolous. When you grow to know them, at least among the *bourgeoisie*, this characteristic is no longer salient. Rather you find yourself constantly surprised that so many people, with honest simplicity of heart, can devote themselves so assiduously to the far from alluring duties — professional, domestic, or whatever else — of daily, weekly, yearly existence. However gay a friend may be concerning trivial matters, you may be sure that, at heart, he will take life in earnest; and that when it comes to hard work, he will attack it with a persistent vigor which might sometimes set a Yankee to wondering whether our lucky compatriots have any notion of how lovingly we cherish our national aptitude for dawdling. I do not remember that I ever saw a French boy whittle a stick; I doubt whether you could quite make one understand why anybody should like to.

This honesty, simplicity, and industry of the French *bourgeois* could not help resulting in an impression so far from one of vulgarity as to be rather one of dignity. And together with this comes another — a shade more precise — which if possible is further from vulgarity still.

The French *bourgeois* have a quality for which I know no better English term than one which almost suggests aristocratic grace — the term good-breeding. To put the matter otherwise, there is a familiar French word which so resembles a familiar English one that it has given rise to much misconception. This word is *gentilhomme*. It looks remarkably like *gentleman*, and indeed it literally means neither more nor less than that. In France, however, the word has retained its original meaning; it signifies *gentleman* only in that limited English sense which would confine it to men of gentle or noble birth. It implies not personal virtues but social rank; and the familiar title of Molière's comedy — "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" — is consequently a humorous contradiction in terms. No frank *bourgeois* would ever pretend to be a *gentilhomme;* to do so would be to deny that he was *bourgeois*, and thus not only to make himself ridiculous, but also to sacrifice his self-respect. In our later English sense of the word *gentleman*, we find a different conception — a conception which concerns moral qualities so much more than social condition that the French themselves sometimes borrow the English word for precise expression of a meaning not completely conveyed by any of their own. This lack in their vocabulary, the while, is not for lack of

the thing which the world should name. For if there be better gentlemen on earth than you shall find far and wide among the *bourgeoisie* of France, it has never been my good fortune to meet them. I doubt, indeed, whether you could anywhere find a social class more solidly, more profoundly, more quietly, more admirably persistent than these same *bourgeois* of the present day. It is a commonplace that the middle class must be the core of any nation, comparatively spared from the over-ripeness of aristocracy, and from the crudity which must everywhere be the lot of the masses. The better you come to know the middle classes — the *bourgeoisie* — of France, the deeper must grow your conviction that a nation of which the core is so sound must be essentially vigorous.

Of course, a social class so comprehensive as the *bourgeoisie*, extending from the summit of professional life to the base of shopkeeping, cannot be rashly generalized. There are many varieties of it, particularly where it approaches some other phase of society. In Paris, for example, the richer men of business and the more influential practitioners of the learned professions tend toward a scale and manner of life very like that of aristocracy. If in the process they begin to lose something of their simplicity, they may

perhaps fall into a certain ostentation. But this is chiefly what happens to the newly rich anywhere. The marvel in France is not that it exists; but rather that it is not more frequent and palpable. The reason is that so many *bourgeois* fortunes seem to be solid and, in their way, hereditary. So long as people are living in the manner to which they were born, you may always trust them to live with confident ease of mood and manner, free from the distortions of undue self-consciousness.

Again, particularly among those university people whose work is concerned with matters of literature or of the fine arts, you will often find the temper and the conditions of *bourgeois* life tending to merge with those of the world of fine arts. There is a considerable frontier on the borders of Philistia and Bohemia, and the region is pleasant to ramble about. For the solid virtues whose enemies miscall them Philistine tend to correct the vagrancies which in full Bohemia appear excessive to unsympathetic observers; and the volatile impulses of Bohemia tend to counteract the want of breeze which might make the inner atmosphere of Philistia a little stifling to one who did not find it congenial.

Again still, there are phases of *bourgeois* life not yet quite remote from the wholesome

old condition of peasantry out of which they have grown. Among my memories of France there is none more pleasant, nor any more full of such sentiment as makes me feel the *bourgeoisie* remarkable for good-breeding, — a gentler quality than gentle birth itself, — than my memory of the manner in which a friend welcomed me to his home. And there, treated with that affectionate respect which the French so delightfully show their parents, was the old mother, still in the neat dress of the region where every country lass had worn it fifty years ago. She had very little to say; but no one could have seemed happier or kinder, more at ease, less self-conscious, as she ate a little meal specially prepared for her rather exacting taste and habit.

In general, the while, one's impression of the *bourgeoisie* is not of its frontiers, but rather of its innermost security. Perhaps the most vividly typical of my memories concerning this is of a summer dinner in a provincial town. A manufacturer had invited us to his house. On going thither, we found it hidden behind his large factory buildings, and accessible only through the walled enclosure where they had grown up about it. Indeed, the whole approach was so far from what one is conventionally used to that I began to wonder whether we were not unwittingly

bound for some sort of picnic. The house, when we got there, looked rather small — partly, I suppose, in contrast to the big factory buildings so near by. The moment you got within its doors, however, it proved commodious, comfortable, and, above all, in thoroughly good taste. There was not too much of anything; but everything was worth while. The pictures were real works of art — by the right men, too. There were plenty of books, evidently in use, and all of the sort one likes to read — not of the teasing kind which one finds in American railway stations and country houses; yet they did not seem a bit priggish, either. The dinner was memorable, both for its quality and for the skilful service thereof by two or three trim maids. Apart from the good cheer the chief difference between this occasion and a similar one at home was that, inasmuch as the occasion was not formal, the men appeared in frock coats instead of in evening clothes, and the women wore high-necked dresses. This is general among the French everywhere, by the way; what we call evening dress they seem to regard rather as a costume appropriate only for occasions of ceremony. The talk was animated, easy, and wide in its range. And after dinner, in the long summer twilight, before we were summoned to the

drawing-room for some excellent music, we sat and smoked in a library built on an arch over the mill-stream. And we looked through a large window at the swirling current, as it dashed along between walls and banks heavy with verdure, and disappeared, not far off, under a bridge, still within our host's premises, which had spanned it — he told me — for more than six hundred years.

He had inherited his property, his duties, and his house, I was given to understand. He was devoting his life to the care of them. He would pass them on to his children, just as any great nobleman might pass on to his heirs the hereditary possessions which chance had placed for a while in his care. No social type could have seemed more admirably permanent. In the fine little details of accomplishment, of impulse, of manner, you could not have found a better gentleman. And yet he was in no respect a *gentilhomme*. He was of the class which the old-fashioned aristocrats of France traditionally disdained as *bourgeois moyens*. His house was accessible, in all probability, only to people whose origin and whose personal traditions resembled his own. You felt there, beyond all things else, that you were in the very heart of the *bourgeoisie* of France; and furthermore,

that there are few pleasanter places, and no better ones, in all this wicked world.

Not the least profound feature of your impression, the while, was that these surroundings have a quality of surprising fixity. Among the *bourgeoisie* you find yourself in a world of hereditary tradition, as stoutly cherished as the more widely known tradition of aristocracy, or as the more vagrant tradition of art. And any class which is animated by attachment to its hereditary traditions must inevitably be, to some extent, a class apart — a separate thing ; not quite a caste, of course, but not free from caste virtues and caste prejudices. The virtue which from time immemorial has distinguished the middle classes of France is probably the virtue most dear to the middle class of England, as well as to the better sort of Americans, among whom middle-class manners have grown to something like the assurance of aristocratic feeling. In a word, we may call it respectability — a somewhat excessive observance of regularity in the conduct of life, a somewhat austere disapproval of even minor vagaries. This quality is not instantly attractive to people whose taste for it chances not to be ancestral. They think it dull at best, as no doubt it is if you do not happen to enjoy it ; and when anybody thinks anvthing dull any-

where he rarely resists the impulse to assert his own freedom from dulness by declaring his opinion. Now, even though you may prefer to be respectably dull, you resent being called so. As a natural result, the deepest prejudice of the *bourgeoisie* is of the self-protecting kind which entertains a certain suspicion of the imperfectly sympathetic classes which environ it.

These, as we have seen, are the aristocracy and the artists. Between them and their *bourgeois* neighbors there seems to persist an immemorial hereditary distrust. The traditional privileges of aristocracy permitted them, and tended to make them pretend to delight in, a liberty both of speech and of conduct extremely foreign to the staid respectability of *bourgeois* sentiment. The somewhat anarchistic impulse of artists to assert their individuality amid the benumbing monotony of prim custom has always tended to excite them to similar manifestations of personal freedom from conventionalities. Both aristocrats and artists have accordingly been accustomed, as we have seen, to represent the *bourgeoisie* in a far from friendly spirit. What is less evident to casual foreigners is that this sentiment of distrust and dislike is mutual. Your typical *bourgeois* regards your aristocrat or your artist with as little cordiality as is evident in the more

familiar opinions of aristocrats and of artists concerning the *bourgeoisie.*

The strength of this resentment was oddly evinced one day when I chanced to be talking with a *bourgeois* friend. The matter under discussion reminded me of a shrewd remark lately made me by a man who happened to possess a thoroughly authentic title. I repeated the witticism. It seemed to impress my friend favorably, for he eagerly asked me from whom I had heard it. I told him, asking in return whether he did not think it admirable. The name of the originator of the epigram appeared to have altered his estimate thereof. It had a vein of good sense, he said, even of wit; but it was too noble. "C'est trop noble," was his final opinion.

On the whole, however, the course of modern history seems tending, in France as well as throughout the older regions of Europe, toward modification of these somewhat obsolete states of feeling. The barrier between the aristocracy and that part of the *bourgeoisie* which most nearly approaches it seems hardly so high as used to be the case. For this there are several evident reasons. The privileges of aristocracy have long been withdrawn; for three or four generations all classes in France have been equal in the

sight of the law; and partly from a rigidity of principle or of training which has tended to result in imperfect flexibility of intelligence, the aristocracy has so generally withdrawn itself from public affairs that, as a class, it retains no vestige of political power. Its importance is only social. Now this phase of its importance seems to have been rather rudely shaken by the accidents of French history during the past hundred years. There remain, no doubt, authentic titles of the old *régime;* but Napoleon created titles by the hundred, and titles were created under the Restoration and under Louis Philippe, and more still by the second empire. Again, if I am not in error, every son of a baron is himself a baron, too, and so on. Furthermore, there is no serious obstacle at this moment — any more than there is in America — to the assumption of a title by anybody. A highly respectable citizen of Boston is known to have been christened by the name of Marquis. Without scrutiny of official record, a stranger in France might well be at pains to know whether the same title on a French visiting card has any more technically noble authority. The true aristocracy of France knows itself, of course, by heart; but hardly anybody else knows it with much certainty. And so far as general social

importance goes, the frequency of French titles and the variety of their origin — even when they are authentic — have probably done amalgamating work.

The increasing fortunes of many *bourgeois*, the while, and the preponderance of political influence which has been enjoyed by the *bourgeoisie* throughout the past century have done their work as well. Marriages between the two classes — such alliances as you will remember in "Mademoiselle de la Seiglière" and in "Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier" — have perhaps grown more frequent; and everybody knows that titled Frenchmen have often married eligible foreigners. The failing of the old aristocratic fortunes, too, has somewhat modified aristocratic opinions in other matters than that of marriage. Particularly of recent years, men of birth have had the good sense to drop some of their outworn notions concerning occupation, and frankly to devote their still vigorous energies to lucrative and respectable careers which their grandfathers would have disdained. In many ways, accordingly, the aristocratic class of France is beginning to reveal itself to the *bourgeoisie* as more deserving of personal respect than *bourgeois* traditions used to presume. Still more certainly, as the two classes tend more cordially to mingle, the aristocracy

seem beginning to recognize in their *bourgeois* neighbors qualities, ideals, and merits far more resembling their own than they had been disposed to expect. For all this, the real aristocrats still retain, I think, a somewhat excessive degree of their ancestral disdain for any traditional inferior. Hereditary *gentilshommes*, they do not yet quite willingly admit that these *bourgeois*, with whom circumstances are gradually bringing them into closer relations, are as good gentlemen as themselves. When all is said and done, however, you can hardly help feeling that each class is growing more aware of its community of interest with the other. They must stand or fall together.

The relations of the *bourgeoisie* with the other social class most near them — with artists in the broadest sense of the term — seemed to me, on the whole, rather less cordial. The world of French art, in fact, though on the whole the phase of French society most familiar to foreigners, who know France chiefly from books or pictures, is probably the phase of French society which these same foreigners least understand. I am by no means sure, indeed, that I came to any accurate understanding of its position myself. I am sure, however, that my impressions of it were at once unexpected and distinct.

Broadly speaking, French artists of every kind

— literary, plastic, dramatic, musical — are men of *bourgeois* origin, who are temperamentally impatient of the respectable restraint of conduct which characterizes *bourgeois* behavior. In their artistic lives they are by no means frivolous or trivial. The sturdily maintained academic standards of France in all matters of fine art compel them to a degree of technical excellence which nothing but hard, prolonged, whole-hearted work can attain. Keen critical scrutiny combines with incessant competition, on all sides, to keep them assiduously at their tasks. Whether they submit to academic convention or rebel against it, the case is the same. As artists they are as impressively and as seriously devoted to their duties as university professors are to theirs. You cannot observe Frenchmen at work anywhere, in fact, without reverent acknowledgment of their inexhaustible industry. The moment you find yourself among artists of the better sort, furthermore, you must surely be impressed by the fervent earnestness of their artistic purpose. Like any other human beings, they fall into little groups, schools, sects, among themselves, each with its virtues and vices, its powers and its limitations; but, whatever the result of their efforts, they give themselves to their art with all their hearts. Yet somehow as you contemplate French society in

its entirety, the artists, as a class, seem distinctly apart from anybody else. They are not aristocrats; they are not *bourgeois*. They are as good gentlemen as either, and as honest men; but they form a separate social group, so distinct from the others — and often so far from instant sympathy with the others — that you can hardly help feeling their temper concerning the others to be tinged rather with defiance than with cordiality.

Apparently, at the same time, their social system is almost as definite in its structure as that of the aristocracy or that of the *bourgeoisie* — mingling on its frontiers with each, but distinctly different from either. Analogies in such delicate matters are apt to be misleading, and perhaps invidious. Yet I can find no better means of indicating the position which artists, considered as a social type, seem to occupy in France than by comparing it with that occupied in England and in America by professional actors — themselves often artists, in their own kind, of memorable importance. There is no reason why a dramatic artist should not be a person of unsullied private character — as indeed is frequently the case. There is also no reason why a person of anything but unsullied character should not be an excellent dramatic artist. This common-

place is equally true of any other earthly occupation, from the papacy to grave-digging. Just why we should assume that the typical actor leaves something to be desired in point of personal conduct I cannot pretend to say. That the assumption exists, particularly among austerely respectable Americans, is beyond dispute; and so is the fact that, however cordially and unreservedly actors are at present received in English and American society, they are usually received in a manner which betrays an implicit assumption that somehow they form a class apart — with manners and morals, traditions and principles, of their own.

Something closely analogous seems true of art in France throughout all its phases. The instantly obvious difference is that the artists of France are not only far more numerous than the actors of England and of America; they are usually more skilful throughout the range of their professions, they are more intensely industrious, more persistently in earnest. Their masterpieces, whether you enjoy them or not, are more nearly excellent, more surely noteworthy. And the social world which they form for themselves is more systematic and more punctilious than is the cheerily vagrant Bohemia of the English-speaking stage. For all this, the world of French

art seems Bohemian still. It may sometimes mimic aristocratic grace or *bourgeois* respectability; on the surface it is as orderly as *bourgeoisie* or aristocracy; at heart, however, it cherishes something like the Rabelaisian maxim, *Fais ce que vouldras.* For which it pays the not unwilling penalty of tacit recognition that it is distinct from either of the other social regions on which it borders, and with the denizens of which it often mingles.

Some such view of French artists as this goes far to explain why, as one grows to know French life in other regions than those of fine art, the accounts of it in French literature and the reproductions of it on the French stage are apt to appear so external. French men of letters undoubtedly know their France inconceivably better than any foreigner can ever know it. Beyond doubt, too, their earnestness and their skill, stimulated by intense criticism and competition, combine to make their efforts sincerely faithful with whatever aspect of life they deal. And yet, when all is said and done, an artist who anywhere attempts to set forth humdrum existence is inevitably dealing with a state of society at once unsympathetic and not completely familiar to his daily habit. This seems exceptionally true in modern France; and the general temper of the

work which French writers and artists put forth year by year rather emphasizes than obliterates the line which separates them, in sympathy, from the *bourgeoisie*. This is one reason, I believe, why we foreigners who have known France mostly through its admirable literature have been so apt to misconceive the prevailing sentiments of every-day French life.

The better sort of people in France may generally be classed either in one of the three groups on which we have touched — the nobility, the *bourgeoisie*, and the artists — or on the borders which separate them from one another. As you grow more familiar with any of these groups, you become more aware of its rather rigid structure. As you grow to know something of all three, you come to feel that in their almost hierarchical constitution they are not only very like each other, but remarkably like the universities as well. You begin, in short, to perceive, throughout French society, the native characteristic of French temper which is least evident to foreigners in general. For all the revolutions which have made the French history of the past century so disquiet, the French love of order and of system, the domestic conservatism of French impulse, has kept the general structure of French private life far more persistent, more

traditional, and less flexible than we are apt to imagine.

Something of what I have in mind is implied in the instantly obvious difference between French visiting cards and those used in England and in America. To all appearances, the fact that my own card bore nothing but my name was apt to excite surprise among my French friends. The nature of my temporary appointment at the Sorbonne gave me, as we have seen, a fairly defined position in the French university system — a respectable degree of official rank. Any Frenchman in this position would have had his precise quality stated on his card as regularly as his name; not to have had it there would have implied, on his part, some such personal eccentricity as occasionally impels Americans to wear their hair long or to affect visiting cards which bear facsimiles of their signatures. To French minds unfamiliar with other than French custom, I discovered, the simplicity of my regular card actually conveyed the impression that I was an ardent apostle of social equality. This was rather comically revealed to me one afternoon over a cup of tea. Before I had perceived whither the pleasant talk was tending, I found myself confronted with something as near as politeness would allow to a direct inquiry as to

why it was my custom to refuse honorary distinctions. This was evidently meant to afford me an opportunity of stating the dignities which my visiting card did not reveal. That I returned some elusive answer seemed, on the whole, to commend me to my French friends. Extreme directness of attack or reply is still unwelcome to the civilized tradition of France. After all, it was my affair, and not theirs. Whoever might use a French qualification on his card might presumably use a better one still at home, where his merits were better known and probably better rewarded. If not, it was doubtless because he was disposed to protest against official and other social hierarchy with a radical enthusiasm like that which induced Monsieur de Lafayette to discard both his marquisate and his particle of nobility. Such eccentricity is creditable to the principle of the individual who displays it. Whether it is equally creditable to his good sense is another question. What remains beyond question is that it does not seriously impair the dignity of the system which it chooses to ignore.

The qualities and distinctions stated on French visiting cards and the like — on formal announcements of bereavement, for example — are of various kinds. They range from titles of nobility

to the mere intimation that a man is practising a learned profession, or engaged in reputable trade. In general, they imply with precision his place in the class of society to which he chances to belong — noble, *bourgeois*, or artistic. Occasionally, however, they indicate his place in some recognized social system apart from all three phases of personal station, and indeed embracing all three together.

In the Church, for instance, or in the Army or the Navy, which are obviously hierarchies quite distinct from the personal origin of the men who win place in them. Of these, however, I happened to see so little that I have no definite opinions about them. It is clear, of course, that among good Catholics the personality of a clergyman counts for nothing, in comparison with his spiritual authority. Once in holy orders, a peasant may meet, on equal terms, a nobleman who would hold his brother in disdain. And, at least since the First Empire, French officers, military or naval, have been personages of obvious consideration. What is more, Church and Army have their own traditions, of far from flexible kind; and excite much enthusiasm or antagonism, as the case may be. After all, however, this is true of the Church and of the Army almost anywhere. For our purposes, it is better

to turn to hierarchies which are peculiar to France. Of these the two most evident are the Legion of Honor and the Institute.

The Legion of Honor, to be sure, has become so comprehensive that the right to wear a red ribbon in one's button-hole has been pleasantly declared to be more frequent in France than lack of this privilege. In all seriousness, this order, at least in its simplest form, is bestowed with almost prodigal generosity on evident merit in all ranges of French life — political, military or naval, artistic, financial, learned, or whatever else. You are not often in a company of a dozen Frenchmen of the better sort where two or three red ribbons and perhaps a red button are not worn. There are moods in which you would suppose that a distinction so general must make little appeal to the imagination; but such a mood is not characteristically French. The Legion of Honor has been refused, I believe, in occasional instances where eccentricity of temper, or lack of sympathy with the government which chanced to prevail, have rendered it unwelcome to a man who had deserved this widely diffused distinction. In general, however, it is not only eagerly welcomed and ardently sought; it is honorably sought and welcomed as well. Whoever grows to know modern French society, I

think, must be surprised to recall the changing sentiments with which he regards the bit of red ribbon familiar to every traveller's eye. At first it seems comically general; then it seems puzzlingly various — worn of right by a bewilderingly contradictory diversity of persons: noble and simple, learned and ignorant, accomplished and uncouth. Finally, without pretending that it has not fallen, now and again, on unworthy breasts, you grow to feel that there are few presumptions in the world more certain than that a man who has won this decoration has really shown himself superior to other men about him. This may be as a shopkeeper; it may be as an actor; it may be as a poet; it may be as a soldier; it may be as a diplomatist; it may almost be as a saint. The Legion of Honor is as catholic as the Church in its relation to all ranges of human life and conduct. But the dignity it confers is essentially a true one. Men who have attained decoration have generally done something well enough to deserve honorable recognition; and the very range of decoration implies the deep human truth that honorable work anywhere, in whatever range of occupation or of society, is in itself a reverend thing. You may say clever things about the rain of the ribbon rather than the reign. You may smile, if you

like, at the childish vanity of a nation which can breed mature men who care whether their black coats are relieved by red specks or not. The Legion of Honor is not misnamed; it implies two impulses deep in the emotional nature of the French, high and low alike: an instinctive love of order, of system, and a fervent belief that honor should be given where honor is due.

Open, like the Legion of Honor, to all Frenchmen who may justly aspire for it, is the more specific dignity of the Institute. This learned corporation consists of several separate academies — of Political Science, of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, and the like — of which the most eminent is the famous "immortal" literary academy of forty members, the Académie Française. Certain familiar facts about this throw light on French character. In principle, any Frenchman, of whatever social rank, who has attained the highest distinction in art, in learning, in letters, is eligible. There has been, I believe, no period in its three centuries when it has not counted among its members noblemen, *bourgeois*, and artists alike. But membership in it does not come without the seeking. The French are too alertly honest to tolerate the kind of affectation most humorously prevalent among ourselves — that of pretending indifference to public honor,

and of assuming that respectable people are bound to behave in daily life as if everybody would like to be a Cincinnatus. When death makes a vacancy in the Academy, whoever believes himself to merit the earthly, or Parisian, immortality thus for the moment accessible, proceeds to inquire, of himself and of his friends, concerning the precise aspect of his chances for it. If these chances seem in any degree promising, he courageously offers himself as a candidate. What the preliminary processes of such candidacy may be I do not know. The crucial part of it is a series of some thirty-nine personal calls on the surviving members of the Academy, from each of whom the candidate formally requests the favor of his vote. Sometimes this is cordially promised; sometimes the answer is politely guarded. The visits do not secure the votes; but without them, I believe, no votes could be secured.

Whatever the personal prejudices of an academician — and these must certainly be widely various — most academicians concur in obedience to the extremely catholic traditions which preserve the vitality of the Academy. Of course it is academic; it could not exist without sturdy maintenance of standards bound to impress vagrant artistic impulse as rigid and repellent, and bound

to be resentfully contemned by many intelligent people who are restive under restraint, or who come to believe themselves meritoriously disappointed. But these standards do not confine the membership of the Academy to any one class of society or of personal character. There is always, I believe, at least one eminent ecclesiastic among its members; when I was in France this was the venerable Cardinal Bishop of Autun, who has since been succeeded by Cardinal Mathieu. There are always noblemen who have distinguished themselves in learning; the Duc d'Aumale, a royal prince, held his membership of the Academy among his dearest honors. There are men of letters, too, scholars and playwrights, of whatever origin. At the two public meetings of the Academy which I had the privilege of attending, the presiding member chanced to be an accomplished dramatist. The permanent secretary was M. Gaston Boissier, that happily immortal scholar whose works have made modern folk understand, for more than fifty years, as no one ever understood without them, what the human life of ancient Rome was like in the days when the republic passed into the empire, and the empire surged on to its ruin.

The ceremony of receiving a new member into the Academy is interesting and characteristic.

In the hall under the dome of the Institute — that dome so familiar to every eye in Paris which has looked across the Seine from the quay of the Louvre — a fortunate company is assembled which has had the privilege of invitation. Every seat is occupied; for the hall is not very large, and the interest in the occasion is eager. Among the company, if you know anything of your Paris, you will recognize people of all ranks and stations — noble, fashionable, learned, artistic, diplomatic, even respectably obscure. You will see clergymen there, and actresses from the Théâtre Français; bearers of historic names and the wives of professors who began their careers in Breton *lycées;* ambassadors and sculptors; journalists and generals. At a given moment the members of the Institute enter, with almost ostentatious informality, the semicircle of benches reserved for all the academies alike; on these occasions there seems no distinction between the immortal Académie Française and its less eminent fellows. On the presiding bench, in the green uniform of the Academy, the principal officers of the day take their places — the member who happens at that moment to preside, the permanent secretary, and a third. The other academicians seat themselves anywhere among their fellow-members of the Institute. Only those

who appear in some official capacity — like the secretaries of the lesser academies — generally wear their uniforms. The aspect of the company is that of a group of gentlemen, on pleasantly equal terms, who are separated from the public by a conventional barrier implying the momentary inaccessibility of their eminence, and permitting them serenely to ignore the presence of anyone but themselves.

This medley of solemnity and simplicity pervades the whole ceremony. In a very few formal words — hardly more than "La parole est à M. X" — the presiding officer announces that the fortunate candidate for immortality is expected to speak. The candidate accordingly rises from his seat, somewhere on the benches, between two uniformed academicians who have been charged with the pleasant duty of introducing him; and courageously delivers in impeccable French a perfunctory and not very audible eulogy on the deceased academician whom he has been chosen to succeed. At the close of this masterpiece of mortuary eloquence the presiding officer proceeds to the official business of the occasion. And this is the most surprising part of it all.

As a foreigner, unfamiliar with academic tradition, I was prepared for some almost ritual ceremony, of lastingly impressive dignity. In-

stead, the presiding officer only opened a carefully written manuscript, which he proceeded to read in the simplest imaginable way. It proved to be a cruelly candid account of just how, in spite of his incontestable merits, the manifold faults and infirmities of the candidate had impressed the academicians who had been called on to consider his case. With due allowance for the beautiful precision of its language and the extreme aptitude of its thrusts, it reminded me — so far as I could follow it — of the sort of discourse with which neophytes used to be received into college societies when I was a student at Harvard. Generalized, it was nothing more nor less than a sublimated process of initiation at which everybody — and most of all the victim — was confidently and justly expected to smile. If you had not known what it was all coming to, you would have been disposed to expect that the luckless man in question was about to be condemned, at best, to oblivion. Instead, it closed with the words — pronounced with something like a sigh of comic resignation — "Vous êtes reçu." Wherewith the function ended, and the happiness of immortality was conferred on one more honorable gentleman of France.

Among themselves, it is said, the academicians

punctiliously maintain the fiction of absolute equality. They are called immortals in jest; so long as their earthly immortality persists, they make believe that they are immortal in earnest; and immortality doubtless confers freedom from the inconvenience not only of human vexation but also of human rank. Anywhere else a royal prince, like the Duc d'Aumale, would be addressed as Altesse; a bishop as Monseigneur. Here all alike are addressed simply as Monsieur. Noblemen, *bourgeois*, and artists alike — royalties, dignitaries of the church, and writers of comedy — are just fellow-beings, like blessed spirits before the throne of grace, or American college boys at last admitted to Greek-letter mysteries. The analogy goes deep. This class of immortal equals is a class apart. It is a brotherhood given to such mutual affection and dissension as animates brotherly life in its domestic phase; but banded together, so long as fraternity exists, in common resentment of unfraternal meddling from without. And the ingenuous completeness with which this highest of French intellectual dignities at once admits the eternal boyishness of human nature, and, with boyish generosity, holds itself open to any aspirant who can prove his deserts, combines with the fact of its recognized social dominance

in all three social classes — noble, *bourgeois*, and artistic alike — to make it perhaps the most profoundly characteristic social fact in France.

At least, I believe, it is the most profoundly characteristic of those regions of French life to which the term "society" can fairly be applied in any limited sense. It recognizes, it assimilates, it harmonizes within itself, aristocracy, *bourgeoisie*, and art. It implies, more than anything else, what they possess, and what they must perforce cherish, together and in common. It leaves out of sight, as any such organization must leave, the masses of the people. And nowadays these masses are matters of such conspicuous interest that those are not wanting who should pretend them ten times more important than their comparatively few fellow-men who have managed, in one way or another, to emerge above the general level of humanity.

Of the masses in France I saw very little. One heard, of course, a good deal about them from friends who were eagerly interested in politics, in economics, or in philanthropy; but one's knowledge was at best a fairly intelligent kind of hearsay. From this I derived one or two general impressions. Taken by and large, I am disposed to think, the unskilled laborers of France are worthily stupid to a degree which must as-

tonish anybody whose general estimate of French character is derived from the alert intelligence exhibited by such Frenchmen as we have hitherto been considering. Certainly what I happened to see in travel of the peasantry and of the lower classes in the cities went far to justify the caricatures just now so widely familiar in comic journals or on the stage. Of recent years, on the other hand, I was led to believe, the skilled labor of France has developed a degree and a kind of intelligence which is both impressive and misleading. Skilled laborers have been intellectually trained beyond any condition in their previous history; they have been immensely stimulated, in both thought and feeling, by so unprecedented political and economic circumstances as have everywhere perplexed the social history of recent times; and, being without prepossessing traditions, they seem at this moment less hampered by hereditary prejudice, more frankly curious, and to all appearances more open-minded than any other class of people in their aspiring country.

This apparent open-mindedness of skilled labor in France has deeply impressed many educated Frenchmen whose personal sympathies are philanthropic or radical. It goes far to justify, at least in honest argument, the startling tendency to socialism so evident throughout the

world to-day, and so extremely prevalent among French people of a character which might lead you to expect that they would regard social revolution with suspicion. What we need to revive the world, they seem to believe, is freedom from the tyranny of prejudice — generous openness of mind. Among the established classes — noble, *bourgeois*, artistic, alike — they look for this in vain. In meetings of skilled workmen, assembled to discuss any topic of social consequence, they find it. A company of devout *bourgeois*, as a socialistic friend told me, will not listen to a speech from an honest free-thinker; they will execrate him, shout him down — "ils le conspuent." A company of free-thinking trades-unionists will listen to the unwelcome convictions of an honest priest as respectfully as if he were preaching what they hold better than Law or Gospel. Better still, they will answer him with fair argument, or something as near it as their powers can command. They will weigh what is said on either side. Wherefore, your socialist concludes, salvation is to be sought among the intelligent masses.

Perhaps so. Only the future can tell. To my mind, this inspiring candor of the worthier kind of laboring men seemed rather a normal phase of social youth. In earlier days they had never

thought at all. Stimulated to thought, they begin to see, with the unqualified precision of juvenility, how many ways there are of confronting problems, and how much better the way they may chance to prefer must be than any other. Still innocent of the inexorable test of responsibility, they display to an inspiring degree the infant virtues of the irresponsible. Give them their way, let them feel the benumbing perplexity of responsible power; and who knows but you shall find your generous confidence resulting in the worst jolt yet known out of the frying-pan into the fire?

At all events, one fact seems fairly clear. The lower classes, stupid or graced with the candor of open minds, are apt instinctively to distrust the upper classes. And this tendency is beginning, in some degree, to diminish the mutual distrust of the upper among themselves. In the face of what nobody can deny to be a common danger, nobles, *bourgeois*, and artists alike seem somewhat more willing than of old to recognize the interests and the ideals which, each in their own way, they traditionally cherish in common.

This tendency to concentration among the higher classes of French society, however, is as yet impalpable. It may not really exist at all. My sympathetic wish to perceive it has

perhaps led me into the error of supposing it conceivable. What is surely no error is that all the upper classes have in common more qualities, more strength, more virtue in the good old sense of the term, than any of them are as yet quite ready to admit. Among noblemen, among *bourgeois*, among artists, you can recognize everywhere that honesty of purpose, that dignity of character, that self-abnegating devotion to duty which combine in the character of a true gentleman. If those whose ideals are truly in harmony can ever learn to speak a common language of the heart, there is little to fear.

The less to fear, I believe, because the more one sees of France the less apparent is that social peculiarity which foreigners are often led to suppose the most deeply characteristic. In certain aspects, no doubt, French society is morally corrupt. No civilized society has yet gladdened this planet without considerable corruption to counterbalance its merits. You might as wisely expect a human organism to flourish free from all trace of disease or of decay. This does not mean that we should not do our best, socially and personally, to fight the microbes. But no sane man foresees the end of microbes so long as anything be left for microbes to prey on;

they are a sad condition of existence. The real question is whether an organism, social or physical, has the kind of strength which shall combat them victoriously.

Undoubtedly there is a popular impression that French society is morally diseased. On a question so delicate as this, furthermore, it is hard to pronounce a confident opinion which should go far to contradict this commonplace assumption. One fact, nevertheless, remains true. The more you see of French people as they live among themselves, in whatever station, the less your attention is called to such irregular, if interesting, social phenomena as foreign gossip had led you to expect. On the contrary, you are increasingly impressed not only with the general regularity of their lives, but with the surprising fact that this general regularity seems to have a very strong hold on their affections. It can hardly be long, indeed, before you begin to wonder whether anyone can get near to the heart of them without sympathetic understanding of the intensity with which they cherish their domestic relations.

III

THE FAMILY

PERHAPS the first experience which began to make me feel what family life means to the French was that, when friends began to invite us to their houses informally, particularly at mid-day, one of my children, who happened to be with us, was generally included in the invitation. At a ceremonious dinner or reception, of course, this would not have been the case. The shade of difference between such an occasion and a more intimate welcome to a household, where you may see people as they live, lay in the fact that, in the latter case, a child seemed to be expected as regularly and as cordially as the parents. To our French friends, in short, for all the kindness which they showed us individually, we seemed primarily a family, for a little while visiting their pleasant country.

As acquaintance thus began to strengthen into friendship, I grew aware that a whole range of commonplace, which would formally occur

anywhere, has in France the sanction of genuine feeling. When we are favored at home with polite inquiry as to our near relatives, or with pleasant messages to such of them as the inquirer may chance to have known, such amenities seem either matters of mere politeness or else dictated by somewhat alert curiosity. In France you soon come to feel that this interest in children whom your friends have never seen is no mere matter of form; it is based on an instinctive assumption that these children must be constantly, anxiously, lovingly in your own mind, — that, of course, they are the things nearest to your heart. So, when French people come to care for you, they show their regard by sincere and alert interest in the family of which you are the head, or a member. The fact of friendship implies welcome not only from man to man, but from all of one family group to all of another, even though unknown a little while before.

Throughout France one met this phase of friendship among all sorts of people, noble and simple, in Paris and in the provinces alike. And the fact that it was genuine was constantly brought home to you by the confidence with which friends who displayed eager interest in your family affairs assumed, as a matter of course, that you would take equally eager interest in

theirs. Two or three instances of what I have in mind may make it more clear. On one occasion, I remember, a friend to whom we had brought a letter of introduction asked us to dine informally. At dinner we met his father, who headed the table. Somehow, we came to know before long that the mother had died a few years ago and that the father had been welcomed to the house of the son, who gave him precedence as matter of course. It transpired also that the robust elderly gentleman had other children. He was justly proud of heading a family which should put dread of race-suicide to sleep. And after dinner, son after son came in to see us, each with his wife, until I think we had the bewildering pleasure of meeting six couples in all, merged in one confidently friendly family group. What made this greeting so memorable was its complete spontaneity. There was not an instant's question in anybody's mind that familiar access to anyone of this little company implied access — cordially welcome on both sides — to all of them. Again, on more than one occasion and in widely different surroundings, I found myself, when welcomed to a family table, not exactly told, but almost assumed to know, that the family circle was no longer complete. Children dead years ago were still so living in the hearts

of their parents that the memory of them cast a shade of melancholy over the welcome of any new friend, recalling what it might have been if all the family had been spared to join in it.

A still more touching incident comes to mind. During our stay in Paris a very old lady died, the mother of a friend who had received us kindly. Though we had never had the privilege of knowing her, who had been, I believe, long invalid, a formal invitation to the funeral came to us. And when the ceremony at the church was finished we found that French custom expected us to pass, with the other mourners, before the assembled family, and to express our sympathy. The manner in which this assurance of condolence was received made the sad ceremony seem more than formal. The only one of the bereaved family whom we had known we had not known very well. Yet their very invitation implied a frank assurance that we should care to know of the bereavement. The passing word, and pressure of the hand, meant that this human sharing in such a grief as time must bring to us all had changed what might have been a passing acquaintance into a relation which, however little we might see of one another in this transitory world, should always have in memory the tender

sanction of a momentary communion of the spirit.

The unity of a family in France, indeed, is implied in a phase of it familiar even to travellers. Among small shopkeepers, and the like, wherever you go, you will find the business in personal charge not only of the head of the establishment but of his wife and of his grown children as well. A little adventure which befell an American traveller not long ago will illustrate what I mean. Just as he was about to leave a town where he had passed the night, on a journey, he had the misfortune to tear his only available trousers. It was necessary to repair the damage at once; so he presently found himself, early in the morning and with little time to spare, in the apartment of a small tailor, who lived in two ground-floor rooms looking out on a delightful eighteenth century courtyard. The tailor fell to work at once. His stout, bustling wife, with a preposterously black false front of hair, cheerily stopped feeding a cage full of twittering birds and began to heat the irons which would soon be required to complete her husband's job. Meanwhile she was full of eager chatter: Where did Monsieur come from? America? Then of course he spoke Spanish. Monsieur was compelled to regret that he came

from an obscure corner of the American continent where a knowledge of Spanish is not yet prevalent. Ah, she said, that was a very great pity. She could speak Spanish herself. She had visited Gibraltar. So had Monsieur, it appeared, a few years ago. The good woman looked up eagerly: Had Monsieur descended at the Hôtel de l'Univers? This innocent question bred all the trouble to come. The traveller, whose visit to Gibraltar was at least ten years past, had quite forgotten the name of his hotel there. One name would do as well as another. Evidently his affable questioner expected an affirmative answer. So he politely replied, Of course; who would go elsewhere? The stout woman beamed like the sun. "C'est mon oncle qui le tient," she said: "My uncle keeps it." Monsieur was delighted. "Does he still wear black whiskers?" she asked eagerly. Monsieur was in for it now, and confidently announced "Énormes" — huge ones. Whereupon she interrupted her husband's work with a cry that this visitor was an intimate friend of their dear uncle; and the conversation proceeded with animated cordiality of interrogation, which put Monsieur's powers of invention to the test, until the repaired trousers were ready.

Then came the crowning moment. How

much did he owe the tailor, he asked, for his kind services, out of hours. What the tailor might have answered he never knew. The bustling, voluble wife, who was then exhibiting to him the accomplishments of her caged birds, interrupted: Owe? He owed nothing. Was not Monsieur the intimate friend of her uncle? Was he not "ami de la famille"? It was a point of honor that the question of money should not arise between family friends. No — she could not hear of such a thing; neither could her husband. And the poor husband, who had worked hard for half an hour, said nothing in denial. And Monsieur had a train to catch; and furthermore he had fallen into much contrite confusion of mind, which seriously impaired his command of French. He saw no way to explain his innocent deceit. To his deep dismay he found himself paying for his trousers with cordial thanks, tremendous pressures of hands, and deep protestations of what delight he should take when he next visited Gibraltar in informing the black-whiskered uncle of the wonderful chance which had brought him the pleasure of acquaintance with other members of so agreeable and honorable a family. The proceeding was not to his credit; but neither was it characteristic. Before and since he has

maintained the principles and the reputation of an honest man. He told the story, indeed, with didactically honest intent. It went to prove, he declared, how scrupulously we should consider the truth even on what might seem to be the most trivial occasions.

On the other hand, this somewhat unseemly incident was deeply characteristic of the good people who so pleasantly deceived themselves and betrayed a well-meaning American into the technically criminal act of obtaining valuable services on false pretences. It illustrated, in more ways than one, the intensity of family feeling prevalent among all classes of the French. So intense was the feeling in this case that, for one thing, it completely overcame the frugal and thrifty impulses which form so considerable a feature in the character of small tradesmen anywhere, and particularly in France. Furthermore, it implied how completely a French family, once constituted, regards itself as a unit. The imaginary innkeeper, with huge black whiskers, was uncle not to the busy little tailor who had been industriously plying his needle, but to his wife, who had only been heating an iron or two, and feeding canary-birds. No matter; the uncle of one was uncle of both. It was a family affair, as the rather meek husband seemed

perfectly to agree. In the third place, inasmuch as this incident occurred not in a shop or in a public place, but in the little room where the happy pair actually lived, it revealed what is often true of French households — that, within doors, the wife is in supreme command, if she have the vigor and the will to be. It left to be explained, accordingly, that if the question had involved the control of property, or anything else in which the affairs of the family had presented themselves not within doors but to the outside world, the husband would have been expected, at least in form, to take the principal part.

Some such relations as were thus trivially indicated are those which appeal most instantly to the instinctive sentiment of the French. This impulse is so deeply, so characteristically national that you will find it in all ranks of life. It is at its strongest, probably, among the *bourgeoisie*, — the middle class, the core of the nation. It exists, however, everywhere; and, when one stops to consider the circumstances, it proves to be based on a deep recognition of natural law.

Whatever else we may be, one thing is true of every human being. As a matter of necessity we all have parents. Without them we could not exist. This obvious condition of our lives

involves the probability of inevitable relationship with a good many other people who have come into the world by channels analogous to those which gave birth to ourselves. Most of us, of necessity and not of choice, find ourselves blessed with brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunts, and cousins, as well as with ancestors and descendants. Though human recognition of this fact is everywhere cordial, there seems a marked difference between the cordiality with which it is recognized in France and that prevalent in many other countries. Elsewhere this cordiality often seems rather conventional. In France it seems the most spontaneous of all impulses. And when you stop to think you can hardly fail to agree that this state of feeling is deeply reasonable. The ties it consecrates are evidently those of nature as distinguished from those of choice. We cannot help being the children of our parents; our children cannot help springing from us; common blood cannot be denied by any process of disinheritance or of adoption. On the other hand some of the closest actual human relations in the world are matters not of necessity but of choice. Nobody, however devoted, is compelled by any inexorable law of nature to be the husband or the wife of anybody else. Comparatively accidental though

marital relation may be, the while, there can be no doubt that the conventional ideals of America have always assumed, as a matter of course, that it ought to be the object of prime human affection. Among the French, on the other hand, though conjugal union seems generally full of cordial feeling, the intensity of prime affection seems more instinctively consecrated to the unavoidable human relation of parents and children.

How far this emotional peculiarity is the cause, or how far it is the effect of the manner in which the French regard the organization, the structure, of the family, it is hard to say. One thing is sure: the state of feeling could not persist in a society where the family was not assumed to be the prime social fact; nor yet could the family present itself as the prime social fact in a society which was not deeply animated by this state of feeling. To the French mind, accordingly, the family, as a fact and as a conception, is more constantly present than to ours. Now a family evidently consists, in the first place, of a husband and a wife, associated for the purpose of founding, if so may be, a new human strain. It is not complete until children are born to them. When these children in turn take mates to themselves, the family increases in potential dignity and strength. It began,

in some degree, as a venture, an experiment; it has proved itself an organism, an institution; it is capable of reproducing itself, and its like, indefinitely; for each branch of it may in turn become a new parent stem. Yet so long as the original founders of any family line survive, they remain, in the estimate of its members, what they are in the course of nature — the fundamental fact without which the organism could never have come into being. The father is in general control both of the family property and of the relations of the family with other families and with the whole outer world. The mother, though formally in due subservience to her lord and master, is virtually absolute in her domestic authority. Their joint sovereignty is one where foreign affairs are intrusted to the man, and where the ministry of the interior is the prerogative of the woman. And if by chance a parent of either happen to survive, this venerable personage, sovereign by the law of nature over one or the other of these lesser sovereigns, is apt to play the part of an enlightened despot in supervising the whole little government in question.

An amiable instance of this state of affairs happened to come to my notice. The daughter of an old lady, herself sprung from the country

gentry — the *petite noblesse* — of a mid-French province, had married, a good many years ago, a highly respectable man of business. Their affairs had not prospered. By the time when I happened to know something of them, they had been reduced to an inconveniently small way of living; their daughters, of twenty-five or thirty, had to occupy themselves as teachers, and the noble grandmother had been compelled by stress of circumstances to become a member of the rather frugal *bourgeois* household. There, as a matter of course, her supremacy was admitted by all her descendants as well as by that accidental if inevitable incident in the line of their descent, her son-in-law. The traditions of her youth, and of the station which she had then occupied, had been severe in the matter of control over the daily life of young girls. Two phases of this discipline impressed her as particularly important: a young woman of respectability should never go out of the house alone, and she should never receive or write a letter, even to or from her own brothers and sisters, without submitting it to the head of the family. The good old lady, being a person of intelligence, felt herself bound to admit the unanswerable logic of circumstance. As it was obviously out of the question that her granddaughters

should be provided with maids, she reluctantly consented that they should be allowed to go out alone to give their lessons. In the matter of their correspondence she remained rigid. Every letter addressed to either of them, even by each other, she conscientiously expected to be opened and read by their mother. Every letter which either of them wrote she expected their mother to read, from beginning to end, before it should be allowed to leave the house. What is more, the pious frauds by which her mandates were sometimes evaded never seemed to attract her attention. She fervently believed that she was controlling her grandchildren, at thirty, in the manner in which girls of gentle family had always been controlled. She ignored the slightly protesting attitude of her *bourgeois* son-in-law. And, so far as I could understand, her granddaughters, though by no means disposed to submit their correspondence to scrutiny, however affectionate, would have thought themselves somewhat rudely radical if they had been so presumptuous as to criticise her principles. Pleasantly extreme as this little instance of domestic hierarchy may seem, it is really characteristic of French family feeling, and by no means unique.

This conception of the family as the prime social fact, and as the fact which must naturally

appeal most directly to human emotion, underlies certain phases of actual French law often misunderstood by foreigners. Having no technical knowledge of law, to be sure, and having made no special study of the details in question, I cannot pretend to authoritative accuracy in this matter. I am sure, however, that several talks with French barristers of my acquaintance deeply modified my opinions concerning a phase of French conduct which has often impressed Americans unfavorably. In general, we have come to understand, when a Frenchman desires to marry one of our compatriots, he displays eager interest not only in her person but also in her worldly possessions; frequently, indeed, proceeding with the delicate negotiations in question only on the specific understanding that she shall have a fixed dowry, to be paid down on the occasion of the marriage which, if all go well, shall crown his wishes. We have furthermore come to understand that a dowry paid down under such circumstances regularly passes into the complete control of the happy husband; that the wife, from whom the property is really derived, has no voice whatever in the management of it. We have accordingly been disposed to imagine that a Frenchman in search of a wife has the unromantic and sordid habit of offering

himself for sale to the highest bidder — an obvious caricature of the truth, but not quite unwarranted by the facts as they present themselves to foreign ignorance.

For our foreign ignorance assumes that the Frenchman who candidly requests a dowry, to be placed under his complete control, desires the same for his own personal use and advantage. In point of fact, he regards it in a totally different light. By the act of marriage he is about to essay the founding of a family. If the family come into existence, the maintenance and strengthening of its position will demand means which shall correspond with its social duties, pretensions, and aspirations. Such means are apt not to be at his unaided disposal. He is cordially prepared to provide as much of them as he can. To secure the interests of his prospective family, however, he needs to have his own provision — much of which will probably come from his own family — supplemented by adequate provision from the resources controlled by the family of his beloved. The dowry, to be sure, must be paid into his hands; for he is about to assume, in his turn, the dignity of the head of a family, one of whose principal duties is to manage its property and in all respects to direct its material prosperity and its relations

with that considerable part of the world which must always remain external to itself. Though in free command of the family property, however, he does not look upon it as a personal possession — any more than a sovereign would look on the gross revenue of a constitutional nation as the annual due of his privy purse. Morally a family property, based on the portion brought by the husband and the dowry paid by the family of the wife, is felt to be a virtual trust, for the ultimate benefit of the children who may be born to them.

To some extent, if I did not misunderstand my legal friends, this moral view of the situation is not only sanctioned but actually compelled by law. The right of disposal of property by will, so little restricted in America that every day Americans are accustomed to assume it virtually absolute by the law of nature and of nations, is rigidly limited throughout France. If parents have children, those children have an indefeasible right of inheritance in all but a limited portion — by way of illustrative hypothesis, let us say in all but one-tenth — of the property which the parents possess. If a bachelor die, his parents, his brothers and sisters, his uncles, aunts, and cousins, as the case may be, — whoever, in short, chance to be his nearest kin, — have not mere

residuary rights, but a positive claim to a considerable portion of his property, varying in proportion to the degree of kinship which may happen to exist between the decedent and his legal heirs. Absolute freedom of bequest is possible in France only in those rare cases where a human being, who owns property, finds himself without kin — in a position where, by English law, the property of an intestate would escheat to the crown. This narrow limitation of testamentary power, which the French assume as a matter of course, is evidently based on the conception that property, as such, really belongs not to the individual, who must surely die, but to the family, which by good fortune may indefinitely persist.

The rights in a dowry, according to this system, become, from our American point of view, unexpectedly instructive. If a marriage result in children, the dowry of the mother evidently becomes a part of their prospective inheritance. So long as the father lives, no doubt, it is wholly in his possession. He is not expected to manage it quite as a trustee, bound to submit detailed accounts. He is assumed to have the interest of his family so deeply at heart that he will freely use their property, to the best of his power, for their common advantage. If he do so skilfully,

it will increase more than if his management of it were hampered by such legal conditions as are needful in the case of trusts. On his death, his children come into their possessions, except so far as their widowed mother may have a life interest in the same. In case, however, a marriage prove childless, the fate of the dowry is quite different. If a wife die without living issue, her dowry reverts, as a matter of course, to her own family, from which it originally came. Her husband, who had complete control of it during her married life, retains in widowhood no rights in it whatever. She cannot even convey rights to him by will, I understand, unless such power has been originally and specifically given to her, so far as it legally may be, by the terms of her marriage contract. The dowry originally came from her family, as their contribution to the future of the family which they hoped might spring from her marriage. Their hopes have been disappointed; the consecration of property to such hopes has proved futile; the property in question must evidently revert to the family to which it originally belonged. Their rights assert themselves automatically.

For a layman to attempt exposition of law is doubtless presumptuous; and I do not pretend this statement to be authoritative. Of one thing,

the while, I am confident. It does not misrepresent the spirit in which French law and French sentiment regard the interests of a family as far superior to any interests which concern only an individual. When we begin to understand this spirit, and only then, we can begin to see how the requests for dowry, so deeply unwelcome to American sentiment when international marriages take place, do not really imply grasping and cynical selfishness, on the part of the French, but are rather an evidence of their affectionate prudence.

For that French temper regards the family with true and deep affection is beyond question. This sentiment of unreserved, self-sacrificing love for one's kin is that on which you may most surely count in France, throughout all phases of society. One is tempted to say that of all the human relations in the world none is more deeply, more sincerely, more beautifully constant and tender than the love which persists between parents and children from end to end of France. An evidence of this anyone may find in the word which I think makes instant appeal to a marvellously profound and enduring phase of French emotion everywhere consecrated by persistent purity of heart. At least in Amer-

ica, we have a perversely mistaken impression of French life, which finds expression in the familiar commonplace that the language of France contains no equivalent for our tenderly cherished word *home.* Strictly, literally speaking, this commonplace may be defensible. There is no single French word completely harmonious at once with our formal phrase "at home" and with the lyric refrain, "There is no place like home," which has made the otherwise insignificant name of John Howard Payne sentimentally immortal. English, on the other hand, has no single word to express the various shades of meaning comprised in the French word *chez;* nor yet those implied in the idiom *à la maison,* which means something different from "in the house." And English has another lack, generally ignored by English-speaking people. Much as they have cherished the manifold and gentle sentiments which cluster in their affections about the word *home,* the generations who have traced their way from cradle to grave in English terms have never found themselves in need of a word which should comprise all the affectionate tenderness of meaning gathered together in the French word *foyer.*

By a paradoxical chance, this word conveys to travellers a completely erroneous suggestion.

As everybody knows, it is applied to those brilliant antechambers of the not too commodious theatres of France, where you go to relax your joints and to breathe comparatively fresh air between the acts, and where you meet a company which, whatever its merits, seems hardly inspired by sentiments of domesticity. To foreign minds, accordingly, the word *foyer* probably suggests, first and only, the painted nymphs who adorn the ceilings of the Opera, or the inscrutable smile of Houdon's Voltaire, together with mirrors, toilettes, and such human beings as take delight in the wearing of the latter and the contemplation of the former; while, hardly in the background, lurks that range of thought and emotion perennially excited by the conventions of operatic libretti, ballets, and the widely ranging stage of France. To the French mind, the word *foyer* no more implies these conceptions as primary than the word *home* implies, among decent Americans, a tidy house, to be bought or hired on terms which should attract people of limited means in search of an abiding-place. The prime, original meaning of the word *foyer* remains the true meaning of it throughout France, — or at least the true and enduring origin of the sentiments now so richly clustered about it. It is the chimney, the

hearthstone, — the core of domestic life, where the family gathers, complete in itself, distinct from any other group in this confused and bustling world, at one with each other, free for the while from all the rest of humanity.

The literal meaning of the word, no doubt, has long ago lapsed from the consciousness of those to whom the word appeals beyond all words else. The term *foyer* arouses no romantic image of flickering bonfires in huts or halls, of smoky rafters and chimneys, of uncouth or antique figures, gentle and simple, warming their transparent hands over the glowing embers, and telling tales of things that were, — heroes, saints, adventures, jests, ancestors and enemies, conquests and defeats, loves and deaths, famines and crops and herds; and yet such depths of emotion as the French find in the word even to this day could hardly have emerged from a human antiquity less immemorial than that wherein such fantasies as these hover, from eldest time. To the French still, the *foyer* is the region where the family is all in all. It implies, accordingly, all the full, deep, complex strength of family affection, which is to them the deepest of national and personal emotions. These emotions are most potent, most conscious, I suppose, among the *bourgeoisie;* they seem to be least

strong in the regions which we have called the world of fine art; in the complicated traditions of aristocracy they sometimes take unexpectedly cynical form. But they persist, with perennial vigor, everywhere. And when you begin to enter into them, when you begin sympathetically to feel something of what they signify in the lives of friends who generously welcome you to their *foyers*, your mind harks back to school days. You find yourself dreaming not of the homes so dear to England and to America, but rather of the hearthstones you used to read about in childhood; you begin to have a new and a reverent sense of what the Lares and the Penates signified who lingered in the devout imagination of ancestral Rome.

The French, we have been accustomed to fancy, do not know what we mean by *home*. Well and good, they may answer; those who speak only English have no conception of what the French mean by *foyer*. In tenderness of sentiment, in instant appeal to emotions of enduring purity, one word is as beautiful as the other. In cherished sacredness of significance, one sometimes comes to fancy, the full meaning of the term *foyer* is richer than that of any single word in our own language. And yet, the better you come to know it, the more certain

you grow that, despite all the analogies of its meaning to those of our word *home*, it does not convey quite the same implications. Which conception may be held ideally preferable, we need not dispute. The question would turn on abstractions and prejudices, like disputes about the loveliness of flowers or of melodies. Pleasant though it be, there is no more inconclusive task than that of those who give themselves up to reasoning about love. There are shades of difference; for the wise it is enough that we recognize them, leaving the judgment among perfections to intelligence higher than that which obscures the mental processes of this world. Such shades of difference as distinguish the French *foyer* from the English *home* spring from the different moods in which the temper of France and that of England are apt to regard the comparative importance of the family and of the individual.

To the French mind, as we have seen, the family is the prime social fact. As a matter of tradition and of system, — and tradition and system are instinctively welcome to the French, — society appears to them as a great group of families; and though each family must evidently consist of the individuals which compose it, the relations of the family to other families and to the whole outer world seem far more important

than the internal relations, within the family, of the individuals whom it includes. The social unit, in brief, is not the individual but the family group. To maintain itself, accordingly, this group must have a recognized organization of its own, to which all its members must submit. In point of fact, so far as my observation went, they generally do so, cordially and willingly. In the very act of so doing, the while, they sacrifice, perhaps without the least sense that they do so, something deeply congenial to the domestic taste of England and of America — secure possession of personal privacy. The *foyer* itself is not a region where you may permit yourself to be quite informally at ease, to behave as your whims might suggest. It is an intensely private little social organism. So far as the rest of the world goes, it is absolutely independent. But within itself it has its own laws of conduct, its own code of pleasant social forms and duties, — something which for want of a less formal term I may perhaps call its etiquette, — no matter in what social rank you may chance to observe it.

In general, I think, French family life — the daily existence of the *foyer* — is full of real charm. It is genuinely, eagerly friendly in its pervasively affectionate feeling; it is pleasantly

animated in its cheerfully persistent conversation; it is full of kindness, of gayety, of social grace which you might well have fancied inconsistent with the inevitable recurrences of domesticity. It is delightfully agreeable, not only to a visitor, who has some passing glimpse of it, but still more to its members, who find its charm strengthened by all the welcome ease and force of life-long habit. But it never suffers its own organization to be forgotten. Every member of a family has, as such, his duties and his dues. The love of French parents for their children, and of French children for their parents, is beyond dispute. It is so fervent, indeed, that only fear lest one might seem invidious prevents one from asserting it stronger, deeper, more instant than such love anywhere else. But even in its most closely intimate aspect it never forgets that the parent is the parent and the child the child. The fact of authority implies the right to formal respect as well as to obedience. The fact that you belong to an organized social group, the while, implies your duty, whatever your station therein, to conduct yourself with courteous consideration for the other members of it. This, too, neither parent nor child ever suffers himself to forget. The great and affectionate pleasure of French domesticity is of a kind which could not exist

if conventions were too much neglected. The result is that, in the full security of their *foyers*, the French seem surrounded by something like the pleasures and the limitations which make at once agreeable and a shade monotonous our American experiences in general society.

This comparative lack of personal privacy in French family life is not merely an external thing. It goes so deep in the French nature that, as a matter of course, each member of any family takes a degree of interest in the affairs of his immediate relations which, under other conditions, might seem intrusive. The simplest of examples will illustrate what I mean. It happened that I had been talking with some French friends about a young American, whose family were in Europe, and who had not found his prospects promising in the profession which he was attempting to practise. When a fortunate accident had offered him an opportunity of more congenial kind in a totally different occupation he had not hesitated to seize it; and he had written the news to his parents as a matter of mutual congratulation — a view of the matter in which they cordially agreed. He was something like twenty-five years old; according to American ideas, he was quite of an age to decide such

questions for himself; his parents were unaffectedly pleased that he had done so. To my French friends this state of affairs was completely perplexing. Their first impulse was to condemn the boy's conduct as cruelly undutiful, and to sympathize deeply with parents whose dignity had been so neglected that they had not even been formally consulted about a matter which evidently concerned the professional future of their child. When I had explained that, so far from feeling neglected or slighted, these parents were in a state of eager gratification, my French friends were hardly able to understand how the parents could be human. Had such a question presented itself to a youth among themselves, they explained, he would have laid it before his father and mother, who would probably have consulted in turn a considerable number of relatives. Inasmuch as it involved a complete change in the career probably before the boy, the presumption would have been strongly against the change. Unless arguments in its favor had seemed convincing to his elders, almost against their wills, their opposition to it would have been decided. And a strong opposition on their part would have prevented a dutiful youth from taking any further steps in the matter; he would regretfully have turned back to the professional career

previously chosen for him, even though it offered him small hope either of contentment or of success. To my French friends, in brief, the question of a boy's profession seemed primarily a family question, and not one which chiefly concerned the youth himself. They recognized, no doubt, after due reflection, that our American view of the case, once explained, was comprehensible. To all appearances, the while, it did not impress them as exactly respectable. A line of conduct which an American would have found encouraging for its enterprise appeared to French minds recklessly adventurous.

When you come to understand this state of feeling, you begin to perceive how differently the question of marriage presents itself in France and among ourselves. To us, even though it clearly involves some readjustment of family relations, it seems first and foremost to concern the happiness and the future of the individuals who wish to marry. To the French, though they by no means neglect this consideration of happiness, a marriage seems even more obviously a readjustment of family relations. In all likelihood our conventional assumptions about the manner in which French marriages are contracted are mistaken. To arrange the marriage of your daughter without regard to her inclina-

tions would be as repugnant to French sentiment as to ours. But when a project of marriage comes to be considered, every member of a family — from eldest grandparent to youngest brother or sister — is disposed to view it in France as a matter of deep and enduring common interest.

Take, for example, the normal position of any French girl. So long as she remains unmarried, her position, in her family, is inevitably secondary. She has her pleasant place in the *foyer*, no doubt; and her pretty little daily duties and accomplishments. She is the object of domestic affection, too, which she reciprocates. At the same time, she is always the object of rather extreme supervision. Anything like personal independence can come to her only through the medium of marriage. Naturally and frankly, then, she wants to be married somewhat more eagerly than is generally the case in America. French girls, I believe, have been known to regret this necessity of their existence, or at least to express polite envy of American freedom in such matters; but I never heard of one who looked with complete equanimity on the prospect of single blessedness in France. Any other prospect, the while, depends on many other considerations than those of unimpeded personal

inclination. For one thing, the very nature of the French family, in its pleasant social unity, keeps young women always within sight of their elders. Except in unusual cases — by accident or by stealth — a French girl rarely sees a youth of her own age, or indeed any man except her nearest relatives, by himself; wherefore anything like the innocent flirtations conventional in America are out of the question, and with them the confident personal friendship between boys and girls which is their frequent result. What youths a French girl knows, she knows only as they appear on their best behavior, before critical eyes. She has not the happy privilege, assumed in America as natural, of blamelessly inspecting her prospects for herself. To a very considerable degree, her opportunities of acquaintance, not to speak of friendship, must be controlled by the conditions of her family life. This very limitation would, of itself, prevent her from regarding marriage so independently as American girls can.

Furthermore, the actual conditions of French law make a marriage less an individual matter than we of America are accustomed to consider it. In most of the United States anybody can get duly married at a few minutes' notice. In France, not to speak of the somewhat intricate official ceremonies required by the law, there is no

convenient way in which anybody can be legally married without the formal consent of parents, so long as the parents survive. A mature man or woman, to be sure, who desires to marry some one unwelcome to a parent, may proceed to summon that parent before a tribunal, and there establish independence of consent. Such a process, however, is evidently rather scandalous; and the last thing which any Frenchman would desire in any aspect of his domestic relations is a public scandal. More surely still, such a process, even though sanctioned by the letter of the law, generally seems quite without the sanction of decent public opinion. Arguments with refractory parents are by no means unknown; they may well become prolonged and passionate, or even complicate themselves with such devices as make interesting the intricacies of many French novels and comedies. But unless a parent, willingly or unwillingly, gives formal consent to the marriage of a child, the marriage will remain, in the opinion of orderly friends, almost as deplorable as if it had been dispensed with. I remember a pathetic story of a man in middle life who fell deeply in love with an irreproachable woman for whom his mother had conceived insuperable dislike. He pleaded with the old lady for years, in vain. At last she fell

ill. Her death would have removed the only obstacle to his happiness. On her very deathbed, however, her spirit did not relent. If her son should follow his inclination, the mother insisted, even when she was dead and gone, he must always remember that it would be against her passionately stated will. And he bowed to the inevitable. His sense of family duty, of obedience to a parent — even though cruelly unreasonable — was stronger than all the force of an honorable and unshaken passion. He never married at all.

To children and to parents alike, accordingly, marriage seems less an individual matter than a social. It evidently involves the readjustment of a *foyer*, already affectionately established; if all go well, it will presently involve the establishment of a new *foyer*, with all its pleasures and its duties. It is this new *foyer*, as we have seen, for which the much misunderstood *dot*, or dowry, is arranged. Compared with any conception generally familiar to good Americans, this consecrated conception of domesticity in France gives one of our conventional terms for marriage a new and deeper significance. We have immemorially spoken of marriage as a partnership; but we are not apt to think of it as primarily so. To the French mind, it seems to be.

A marriage is too serious a matter to be dominated by romantic notions of unimpeded inclination. It involves too many questions of this work-a-day world — questions which can be met only by the prudence of corporate good sense. There is no reason why a partnership, even of the literal kind, should not be confidently cordial and friendly; there is no reason why you should generally enter into one with any violence to your inclination; and these considerations become more potent than ever when the partnership involved is the life-long and intimate partnership of wedlock. But all such considerations rather emphasize than obscure the truth that the French ideal of marriage, tenderly admirable though it be, is primarily an ideal of cordial and friendly domestic partnership.

At the time when this view of the matter was defining itself in my mind, an eminent member of the Académie Française gave utterance to an opinion which occasioned considerable momentary discussion, sometimes rather exuberantly merry in form. Precisely how he expressed the opinion I do not remember. What remains fixed in my memory is that, after pondering on the general problems of life so frequently evident in the literature of France, he permitted himself to conjecture that things might go better if people

who got married were more apt to be in love with each other. To an American mind, this opinion seemed either commonplace or else paradoxical in emphasis. The matrimonial infelicities which occasionally occur in our country more frequently arise from blind intensity of love in the beginning than from prudent lack thereof. To his French readers, on the other hand, the opinion seemed either exasperatingly or divertingly to contradict established principle. To them marriage was obviously a matter of serious prudence — to be contracted as reverently, as soberly, and as much in the fear of God as circumstances would allow. Love was doubtless an admirable and beautiful thing; but in its mundane aspect not to be controlled by all the reverent and God-fearing sobriety imaginable. In this case, accordingly, academic wisdom seemed a frivolous guide, counselling that in the most solemn business of life we should do well to throw prudence to the winds.

For when once a French marriage is accomplished, and the new family life begins, there arise for the parties concerned the new duties involved in their resolution of partnership. Anywhere these duties are of different kinds. Anywhere you may generally classify them in two groups: one consists of the purely conjugal duties

involved in the individual relations of the happy or unhappy pair; the other consists of the domestic duties involved in their common relation to their parents, their children, their friends, and their servants, — in their household government and in their dealings, of whatever kind, with other people than themselves. Everywhere in the world, no doubt, both kinds of duty are recognized, frankly, willingly, and loyally. It would everywhere be recognized, too, that the more nearly these not needfully divergent phases of duty harmonize, the better for everybody concerned. But certainly, in America, the conjugal phase of duty is held to be the more essential; in France, on the other hand, the more essential phase of duty seems rather the domestic. The difference goes deep; it is a question of immemorial tradition, strengthened by all the force of affectionate instinct. With us the strongest of human ties is believed to be that which attracts human beings to one another. With them, the most durable of human ties is, with equal fervor, believed to be that of parentage, of common blood. Both conceptions are beautiful; both noble; it were futile to trouble ourselves with wondering which may immutably be held the better.

For, in the full meaning of a term familiar to

anyone who has ever read French literature, both are wonderfully implied. In all human language, I believe, there was never gathered together more admirable significance than you shall find, when you come emotionally to understand them, in the French words *honnête femme*. The Frenchwomen who deserve to be so called are countless everywhere throughout France. They are not only the most admirable type of French womanhood; they are the most pervasive, the most frequent, the most profoundly characteristic. That they are not always the most instantly evident to careless, to foreign, to artistic eyes is partly because, like light and air, you shall find them wherever you go; and partly because their unrepining devotion to their absorbing duties keeps them inconspicuous. They would not be themselves if they were not conjugally faithful — and faithful not only in personal constancy, the sense most instantly implied by these terms, but faithful also in devotion to their husbands throughout the complicated and perplexing cares of incessant responsibility; conjugal love would not be enough without life-long conjugal friendship too. But all the conjugal love and friendship imaginable would not suffice, either, without faithful observance of domestic duties, as well, in all their intricate range. An

honest woman of France is not only a good wife; she remains, as she was in girlhood, a good daughter, affectionately faithful to the family which gave her birth. She is a good sister, too, and a good friend, both to those whose ties of blood are her own, and to those with whom her marriage has brought her into relation almost as dear as if it had been sanctioned by the full flood of nature. She is a good mother, even more surely still, cherishing with the purest of human passion the children whom she has brought into the world. And her very obligations to these children, as well as to their father, compel her also to be a good housewife — never to neglect the humdrum details of her daily surroundings. Unending, intricate, prosaic duty is the condition of her whole existence; and she does it, from girlhood to old age, unselfishly, happily, cheerfully. For not the least of her convictions is that she must make the life about her a pleasant thing for those who have their part in it. To fail in any of these ideals is to lack something of what an honest woman should be — no less if the failure affect only domestic duty than if it be concerned with conjugal.

And just as a good Frenchwoman must be daughter, mother, sister as truly and as devotedly as she must be wife and partner, so a good

Frenchman must be not only husband but son, too, and father and brother. Theirs is a far older world than ours; not necessarily a more intricate, perhaps, but a far more systematic. It is more used than ours to the conditions which must everywhere surround and affect human nature. It has fewer dreams, more certainty of what must befall us all. It is far more willing to generalize the condition of any individual. It admits more of what, however unwelcome, is inevitable. It accepts limitations, bereavements, errors, — not because they can ever lack poignancy, but because with all their poignancy they are like death and sunset, conditions of all human existence everywhere. The French, perhaps, have strayed further from Eden than we. That need not mean that we have travelled beyond them on the road to Paradise.

Among ourselves, no doubt, the ethical ideal is perfection. So it is everywhere, and not least in France. The standards by which the French would judge one another are at least as severe as any which we should ever think of applying among ourselves. But, even more surely than we, the French are aware that humanity can never be quite perfect. And when, in considering all the range of a man's life, they feel that we should be a little blind to his faults and very

kind to his virtues, their prepossession, in judging him, is not the same as ours. With us, unless we are boldly unconventional, the chief of all our human duties is assumed to be conjugal rectitude. So long as a man faithfully observes his marriage vows, the lenient opinion of America will not so carefully scrutinize his conduct to his parents and his children, his brothers and his sisters. Above all, it will hardly trouble itself to inquire whether he behaves agreeably at home, or permits himself, within doors, the luxury of complete freedom from uncomfortable self-control. In France, on the other hand, where the family is so deeply rooted in national affection, no man can neglect his homely domestic duties without braving public opinion. For this severity there is a touch of compensation. So long as he does his faithful best in his domestic relations, his conjugal vagaries may perhaps be held secondary — much as domestic vagaries might be held among ourselves.

It is with no purpose of maintaining either view to be better or worse than the other that I am trying to make clear this deep difference of ethical feeling. It is only for the purpose of defining, so far as lies in my power, the extraordinary intensity of love for the family which inspires all classes in France. One finds it often

satirized in French literature, where complete devotion of family affection — particularly among the lower classes — is frequently presented in salient contrast with the lines of conduct to which one or another member of the affectionate family may be led by perversity or compelled by circumstance to resort. One meets it, again and again, in every phase of French life, and sometimes surprisingly.

Not long after I first arrived in Paris, I remember, a rather scandalous case happened for some days to occupy the public prints — until something else distracted popular attention. A certain unfortunate Parisian had been detected in a course of gallantry unhappily remote from conjugal rectitude. The matter got into the courts, and involved the publication of letters which he had written, in vain hope of averting a catastrophe. In these he made no pretence of denying his misbehavior; but he begged, most piteously, that it should be forgiven, or forgotten, or hushed up — as the case might be — on the ground that, if matters were pushed to extreme, the most sacred fact of his existence — his *foyer* — would be broken up. Such an appalling event as this, he implied, would make his life meaningless; the prospect was one which must induce even vengeance to relent. To me, as a stranger, these

letters seemed inconceivably grotesque. How anyone who had been so far from exemplary as this errant husband could pretend to cherish domestic sentiment, I could not imagine. Not the least repellent phase of the whole thing was what thus seemed to be his clumsy hypocrisy.

As I came to know the French better, I began to feel how deeply mistaken I had been. I may be so still; for I do not remember having verified my final impression of this incident by referring it to any of my French friends. Nothing, of course, could have averted, or much have modified, the grotesque contrast between the unhappy man's conduct and the considerations which he invoked in his appeals for mercy. But the appeals themselves ceased to seem transparently hypocritical; in the end I came rather to believe them pathetically sincere. Whatever he might deserve as an individual, I could see, this human being, born and bred in the intensity of domestic tradition so genuine among all the French, could not contemplate without passionate grief the destruction of his domestic interior where, for all that appeared to the contrary, his kindly social qualities had made daily life pleasant to his nearest — if not quite to his dearest. So long as he had done his duty at home, he could still be conscientious in believing himself

the only safe and sure protector and guide for his unfortunate children.

In brief, as one grows familiar with the French, one grows more and more wonderingly aware of how their whole conception of the family, with all the consecrated emotional sanction of the *foyer*, makes them look upon themselves primarily not as individuals, but rather as members each of his own little society. The family is a partnership, if you will, — a corporation, or a clan. It is something more than the sum of the individuals whom it comprises in all their human and fallible complexity; it has a dominant, supreme claim to devotion for its own sake. The human beings who compose it, like those who at any given time may compose a nation, must pass into oblivion; but the family itself can outlive them perennially. The first of human duties thus becomes not individual, but rather self-abnegating and social. To this ideal of duty the French are deeply loyal. If they had not followed it throughout the generations with eager, unselfish, persistent fidelity, their society could not exist in the form which it has inherited from their past and is transmitting to their future.

IV

THE FRENCH TEMPERAMENT

THE considerations on which we have been dwelling may seem to point towards the conclusion that the French, as one grows to know them, prove to lack individuality. This is far from the case. We might equally have fancied, from our consideration of their university life, that they are deficient in emotion, or at least in tenderness of sentiment. How deep that error would have been our glances at their family life must have served to show us. To understand how individual they remain, amid all their willing acceptance of traditional system, we must try to sympathize with certain marked characteristics of their national temperament.

This is not so easy a matter as it might seem. An attempt sympathetically to understand any foreign people, however cordially disposed, must always be undertaken with delicacy — not least because you can never be quite sure that you may not inadvertently fall into errors, or infelicities of phrase, more than likely in turn to bring

about unhappy misconception on the part of the friends whose character you are endeavoring to explain. Delicate anywhere, such an effort seems especially so when it concerns the French; and this for more reasons than one. As the whole world knows, they are full of sensitive feeling, and, like all swiftly emotional human beings, they are almost equally ready to welcome sympathy and to resent misunderstanding. What seems less generally understood is that when mere acquaintance deepens into friendship, they often prove, in comparison with Americans, remarkable for the last quality which the simple ease of their manners and the extreme frankness of their mental habits might have led you to expect. This is something very like personal reticence.

No people could be more free or more kindly in their general talk; none could receive you in a spirit more genuinely and delightfully friendly; none, when they welcome you in their homes, could make you feel the welcome more unreserved, less clouded by any shade of consciousness that you are not quite of themselves. And yet, after many a pleasant hour with them, often full of stimulating intellectual interest, you may find yourself surprised, on reflection, that you have not really grown to know these friends any better than before. At least, if you have, it is not be-

cause they have told you anything more of their inner lives; it is only because the eager animation with which they have discussed matters apart from themselves has incidentally implied what has been going on within them. It would be a grave error, I think, to conclude from this that they have meant to hold you, as a visitor, at any distance; or even that, without intention, they have in any manner done so. The better I knew them, the less I was inclined to believe that there was any shade of difference between their treatment of me, as a foreign friend, and their treatment of the French friends whom they welcomed at the same time. Even among themselves it seemed to me — in the full confidence of life-long friendship — they were far less apt than we to stray into speech, or even into thoughts which, in distinction from confident, might be called confidential.

It was more than once my privilege, for example, to dine with a company of men who had been friends from boyhood. Nothing could have been more spontaneous than the eagerness of their enjoyment in meeting each other familiarly and in strengthening at each new meeting the tie which had held them together through years of busy maturity, in some instances crowned with conspicuous success. Nothing could have been

more delightful than their alert, helpful interest in whatever concerned any of their little group — their sympathy with the trials of one, their complete enthusiasm when another achieved some object of his effort, or some just reward for work well done. One felt as one might feel when received into the full and confident intimacy of some affectionate club of congenial classmates, graduated years ago from an American college. Such an experience is not only pleasant; it is tender. You remember those who have so welcomed you with something like their own contagious sentiment of mutual good-will. And yet all the while, when I was with these French friends, — who were among those, I hope, who shall always stay friends, — I was aware, even when they were talking most freely with one another, of something more like restraint than would normally have characterized such a company in America. It was not easy to define. It was not reserve, yet it had some touch of reserve. It seemed based on a deep, impulsive, instinctive sentiment that the innermost truth of personal feeling could not decently be revealed — that such truth should be kept sacred for occasions almost of confession, devout or mundane, as the case might be. To unveil it, as we might unveil it at home, I sometimes came to fancy,

would have seemed to them like some shameless exposure of spiritual nudity. I can find no better name for the trait I am trying to define than an instinctive modesty of the spirit.

Indefinite, elusive, though this peculiarity be, in its teasing contrast with their voluble frankness concerning other matters than spiritual, there can be no doubt that something of the sort is deeply characteristic of the French. However infelicitously I may have explained it, I am sure that it is there to explain. I am sure, too, that one must understand it sympathetically, no matter how little one can articulately define it, before one can fairly understand the mutual misapprehensions which have so long obscured the personal intercourse of the French with their neighbors, the English, or with us of America. To put the matter most gently, there can be no question that, broadly speaking, the French are apt to appear in English or American eyes, and the English or Americans in French eyes, as somewhat deficient in a virtue equally respected by all three — the virtue of candor. Now all three of us understand that, so far as this opinion concerns ourselves, it is mistaken. No fervor of French conviction could ever bring Englishmen and Americans honestly to agree that the typical nature of England — which so far as this consid-

eration goes includes that of America as well — is perfidious and hypocritical. Nor could all the virtuous indignation ever expressed across the Channel or the Atlantic ever induce honest Frenchmen to conceive their national character as intentionally insincere. Nobody can doubt, however, that these misconceptions have long had, on both sides, the rooted sanction of tradition. Our present business, accordingly, is not so much to disprove the traditions as to seek for something which shall explain them.

This may be found, I think, in the different aspects in which the national tempers of England and of France regard the quality of candor. The English ideal of candor, which I conceive to be substantially ours of America too, is intimately personal: a candid man we think is one who reveals to us, at any moment, exactly the condition of his inner life, in all its troublesome complexity of thought and emotion. So long as he does not keep this hidden, we are more than merciful to the manner in which he may confront the specific problems of life and of philosophy; we see no everlasting reason, for example, why he should put himself to any inconvenient pains in order that his preaching and his practice — or his assertions and the facts they concern — should agree. If he let us know him-

self as unreservedly as he can, we believe him completely candid. The French ideal of candor, on the other hand, is rather intellectual than personal. It admits, it almost demands, a degree of personal reticence which, by tempers like ours, might well be held to pass beyond the extreme of prudence; but when it confronts problems, whether of life or of philosophy, it rigidly demands a degree of intellectual frankness which our less alert mental habit has hitherto allowed us cheerfully to neglect.

The difference we are trying to understand is not, to be sure, a contradiction; it is rather a matter of ethical emphasis. Frenchmen and Americans would equally admit that ideal candor in all its heavenly perfection should be intellectual and personal alike. To the French, however, the intellectual phase of this virtue presents itself as the more essential; to us the more important phase of it seems to be the personal. As a nation the French are no more untruthful than we are hypocritical. Yet the fact that each of us is apt, at least in unthinking moments, to suspect the other of such addiction to national vice goes deep in the characters of us both. And beyond peradventure, this unlucky tendency to misapprehension makes profound mutual sympathy or insight no easy task for one who should

attempt to explain to either nation the temperamental nature of the other.

What is more, when anybody tries to give some account of the national temperament of the French, another difficulty presents itself, obvious the moment you begin to travel about the pleasant land of France. In America we have an artless way of deploring the ignorance of foreigners who suppose the United States to be the home of a single and homogeneous people; we smile at the ingenuous way in which Europeans confuse North and South, East and West; we wonder how anybody can pretend to intelligence who does not recognize as fundamental such distinctions as we all feel at home to differentiate New England from the Middle States, Virginia from Ohio, California from Nebraska. With equal artlessness we of America seldom trouble ourselves to remember that France extends from the Netherlands to the Pyrenees, and from the Atlantic to the Alps; that it borders on Belgium, on Germany, on Switzerland, on Italy, on the Mediterranean, and on Spain; that even well within its borders no two of the old provinces, whose names and traditions survive almost as lustily as if they still had political existence, have been alike either in origin or in history. The little differences in our own coun-

try on which we lay such emphasis are, at most, the results of two or three centuries. Those which must meet the eye of any traveller in France are sometimes older than Roman Gaul—lost in the inscrutable distance of prehistoric antiquity. There are few regions in the world where you shall find more incessant variety of landscape than in France, known to most travellers within human memory only from the trim lowlands which flit by the windows of railway carriages between Calais and Paris, or between Paris and some Continental frontier. Flanders, Normandy, Brittany; Auvergne and the Cévennes; Provence, the Gironde, Périgord; Burgundy and Champagne, have each their distinct aspects, as various as if they were in different continents or different planets. Each has its own immemorial forms of human expression as well; above all, its own architecture, most surely evident in the country churches, which still imply everywhere the pervasive power of the Catholic religion, once dominant throughout them all. Each, too, has its own type of human beings, ancestrally distinct from all the rest. If ever country or nation were composite, it is the France of this very day.

And yet, as you begin to know France with some approach to familiarity, there grows upon

you the feeling that this composite, incongruous variety of humanity can somehow be generalized, despite the luxuriance of its incompatible detail. After all, our foreign prepossession is not so baseless as it might sometimes seem. Partly, perhaps chiefly, because of the dominance of Paris, — that extreme centralization of national life which attracts the strong and the restless from every nook and corner of France toward the capital, — you come to perceive that in many ways the French are really at one in some such sense as our foreign commonplace has immemorially supposed. Years ago, no doubt, this impression would have been somewhat deeper; for it would have been confirmed by obvious peculiarities of personal appearance, even in Paris itself. However various among themselves, the French as a people used to look their part. John Leech, for example, caricatured them, in a spirit as far from sympathetic or appreciative as that in which French caricaturists were apt, in his time, to portray the teeth and the taste of English girls. In his least happy efforts, the while, you were bound to admit that his wasp-waisted men, with peg-top trousers, fantastic hats, and inconceivable methods of hair-dressing, resembled what any traveller might see in Paris and nowhere else. This specifically French aspect of humanity,

most familiar perhaps in the waxed moustaches of Napoleon III, began to disappear, I think, with the fall of the Second Empire. Nowadays it is so much a matter of the past that your first impressions at Paris, whether in the streets, in any public assembly, or in the pleasant society of the French themselves, is rather of their likeness, in look and in dress, to other people than of any unfamiliar traits peculiarly their own. In feature, in obvious manner, in costume, they rarely delight us with such oddities as we used to fancy typically French. Until people begin to speak you may often be at pains to know whether they are going to address you in the language of France or in your own. The vivacious, erratic Frenchman of traditional fancy is as obsolete as that unwinsomely insular sort of Englishman who once justified the "Goddam" of Beaumarchais. This change, I think, is not wholly external. It goes far more deep than the extending prevalence of London fashions. It is one of many evidences that the French are less disposed than of old to consider the rest of humanity as barbarians. But it does not mean, in any sense whatever, that the French are not still as French as they ever were.

In their national character at the present time, however, the most instantly obvious trait is

by no means what you conventionally expect. Whatever else the French have been, they have managed, throughout the past, so to present themselves to foreign eyes that foreign tradition is everywhere agreed in supposing them to be at least volatile and gay, if not completely frivolous, in their general manner and address. So far is this from the present case that I can hardly believe any people anywhere to seem more deeply, more impressively, more startlingly serious than they now seem both in formal intercourse and still more when you begin to know them. This phase of their nature is perhaps more evident among rather young people than among people old enough to remember other days than these on which we are fallen. One of my most agreeable talks in France was with an elderly gentleman in whom the solemnity of the present time had not quite overcome the more gay traditions of social and conversational habit prevalent in his youth. With a deep sense of the perplexity of the situation he expressed in epigrammatically happy phrase his despairing wonder as to what could become of his country when it had passed into the hands of a generation so austerely in earnest as the dutiful sons then hospitably gathered to meet me at his table. Their respectful reception of his melancholy

pleasantry seemed in some degree complicated by regretful conviction that it was deplorably deficient in seriousness.

Yet, however deep this seriousness of temper now so evident among the younger French, it is not a bit priggish; it is as far as possible from such smug religiosity as associates itself with our conception of serious-minded youths in England or America. It is in no wise incompatible with courage and courtesy as profound and as punctilious as any which ever illustrated the traditions of elder France; and furthermore it involves a surprising degree of self-control. A little incident of travel will illustrate what I mean; the better I knew French people the more it impressed me not as exceptional, but rather as just what one might expect of them.

It happened that a well-educated man of thirty or so — a *licencié*, who had formerly contemplated an official career — found himself compelled by the illness of a chauffeur to take personal charge of an automobile which had been let to some Americans for a journey through country regions. Something went wrong with the machine; so, while his travellers were at luncheon at a wayside inn, he attempted, though not an expert machinist, the troublesome mechanical task of putting it in

order. Exactly what happened to him the party in his care did not understand. A commotion outside the inn called them forth to the painful discovery that, by reason of some unexpected start of the machinery, he had broken both bones of his right forearm. The poor fellow was in great suffering and deathly pale, but as quiet as if nothing had happened to him. His first words were to express intense regret that his awkwardness should have resulted in an accident which must interrupt, for a little while, the pleasure of their journey. In all simplicity, his only thought seemed to be not of his own misfortune but of the inconvenience it involved for others. The nearest medical attendance was in a large town, six or eight miles away. The only means of getting him thither was a jolting country cart. For some half an hour after it stood ready he refused to start, devoting himself, in spite of his pain, to what he declared to be obvious duties — such as arranging that his automobile should be duly stored in a barn until it could be sent for, and despatching telegrams for someone who should come, as soon as possible, to replace him. Then he finally consented to jolt off toward the distant surgeon. He had not uttered a syllable of complaint; he had not shown a trace of excitement; his only reference to the accident was a re-

peated regret that it must inevitably annoy other people.

They had to follow him by railway two or three hours later. On their arrival at the hotel where he had been driven they found that he had been taken to a hospital, for the reason that in the surgeon's opinion the setting of his arm would involve a degree of pain requiring anæsthetics. They anxiously pursued him thither, to find that he was no longer there. When he had discovered that anæsthetics would confine him to his bed for some hours, it appeared he had insisted that the bones should be set without them. He had things to do, he had informed the surgeons, which would not permit him the luxury of lying still, even for a single day. He had borne the operation without a moan or a quiver. Then he had hurried off to the nearest telegraph office. Before he reported to his employers at their hotel, late in the evening, he had arranged that their automobile should be brought on to them at once, and had received assurance that a man who could replace him as driver should start to do so the very next day. Nothing could have surpassed his quiet, self-neglectful devotion to duty; unless, indeed, it were the simplicity with which he seemed to assume it a matter of course.

And yet, a few days before, these same American travellers had been startlingly reminded that he had a high temper. A French gentleman, having lost a pair of spectacles at a hotel where both parties were passing the night, had so far forgotten himself as to inquire whether they might not perhaps have been stolen by the chauffeur who had placed himself at the disposal of the American tourists. His suspicion, it may be added, was perhaps faintly justified by the range of anecdote, often without foundation, which prejudices the reputation for minor honesty of professional chauffeurs in France. Before the inquiry had been pushed, the missing spectacles had been discovered under a pillow in their owner's bedroom; and before the suspicion had reached the knowledge of the innocent youth suspected of petty thievery, their owner was miles away in his own car. He had left behind, however, a record of his name and address; and these the youth was presently observed to be noting down. At the moment, he quietly explained to the head of his American party, he was not in a position which would quite justify him in demanding satisfaction of a gentleman; but his employment in his present capacity was accidental and temporary — an act of courtesy on his part to his employers and to their clients.

Not only his brother but his brother-in-law, too, were officers in the army. As soon as his present business was finished he should ask them to put themselves in communication with this gentleman who had taken the liberty of doubting his character. It was probable that when the situation was explained the gentleman would take the occasion to express regret. If not, he would have to fight a duel.

Whether this incident led to anything further, I have never happened to know. It clearly showed that, for all the self-control of the man when duty was concerned, the traditional animation of French temper is no fiction. If worst came to worst, it meant that the two Frenchmen involved would by and by meet one another somewhere, in the presence of friends and of surgeons, and would cross swords or fire pistols. It was highly improbable that, in any event, either would be more than scratched. The mere fact of the meeting would suffice to settle a rather delicate point of honor to everybody's satisfaction. The parties, thus introduced to each other's notice, might perhaps become good friends. And, according to the view of such matters now conventionally accepted among ourselves, the whole affair would have been ridiculous.

Again, there is no reason why we should trouble ourselves to consider whether our opinion is wiser than theirs or not. Beyond dispute, the two opinions are widely different; and until we try to take theirs we cannot pretend sympathetically to understand what manner of men they are. In one point, French and English agree: whoever does not cherish a sense of personal honor is not exactly what either of us would call a gentleman. In past times gentlemen have been apt to resent any imputation on their honor by challenge to mortal combat. During the nineteenth century this custom has disappeared in both England and America; in France it has been so modified that contemporary duels rarely hurt anybody. Wherefore we have grown to suppose that with the French the whole thing has become a mere pretence; just as they seem disposed to think that, with us, the sense of honor has fallen into abeyance. They are mistaken, of course; but no more so, I believe, than we are. The difference really goes deep in our national tempers; it turns on the fact that they are at once more searchingly intelligent than we, and far more disposed to believe in the importance of established system. The only circumstance which we take the trouble to notice in modern French duels is that they seldom do

much harm; the fact apparently uppermost in the French mind is the obviously implied one that, whether a duellist come to any manner of grief or not, a man cannot take part in a duel without deliberate risk of his life. His act, though probably only conventional, may turn out to be mortal. And even though, in general, it happily prove a mere formality, it involves, on the part of all concerned, a brave acknowledgment that anyone pretending to membership of civilized society must hold himself responsible for any deviation from the code of conduct which its traditions prescribe and which its existence involves.

So far as general behavior goes, I think, there is little to choose between us. Our neglect of punctilio during the past century has not resulted in wide increase of misconduct. Their insistence on punctilio, as was evident in the incident of the traveller's spectacles, has not resulted in universally faultless behavior. And neither they nor we are so much given as our ancestors were to killing people with whom we may happen to disagree. We should not be ourselves, however, if we did not bluntly see only the formal exterior of their insistence on regularity of system; and they would not be what they are if they did not find our indifference to system reprehensible. They are far more alive than we to all that formal

system implies. Which is one chief reason why they care so much for it.

This passion of the French for system is among their most pervasive traits as a nation. The considerations on which we have just been touching have reminded us how animated their temper remains when chance involves any violation of the respect due to their persons or to their dignity. In matters of this kind, any of us can easily sympathize with their impulsive reaction of feeling, however little we may approve the form which their acts of resentment take. A more puzzling phase of their emotional sensitiveness appears when the exciting cause of it is such as we should personally hold secondary. Anybody can understand why men should grow highly excited when personal dignity or personal interest is concerned. It is harder to see why mature people need lose their heads and their tempers over abstract propositions. Yet hardly anything is more frequent among the French, with their persistent attachment to intellectual candor. The circumstance most likely to rouse them into animated display of feeling is anything which should appear to threaten, or even to call in question, the validity or the prosperity of any system — established or ideal — sanctioned by their approval.

Among the general questions frequently discussed nowadays in France, for example, is that of divorce. It happened one day to occur at the house of an intelligent and interesting woman who had previously impressed me as remarkable for repose of manner. This range of speculation revealed her in a new character. She became almost dramatically animated in her intensity. For various reasons — we were not all of the same way of religious thinking, for one — the ecclesiastical aspect of divorce was not mentioned. The purely social aspect of it was quite enough to excite her to an eloquence which I cannot pretend to reproduce. The substance of her discourse, however, was too vivid to be forgotten. She took, as her example, a concrete, though apparently imaginary case. Suppose, she said, that a man marries a young girl of irreproachable character, an ideally honest woman. Their life has its hardships and its trials. The wife is not only burdened with her domestic duties — the monotony of her housekeeping, the bearing and the care of her children ; as an honest woman she is the constant counsellor of her husband in the questions which perplex his own career and his conduct of the family fortunes. The years pass. The penalty of her devotion to duty is that it must leave its trace on the charms of her per-

son. She is no longer young, and she looks her age. Her husband, meanwhile, is not yet so old as to be insensible to the allurements of youth. A young girl, somewhat older than his daughter, becomes a member of the household, in the character of governess. The honest wife admits her without suspicion to the *foyer* — the family circle. The husband cannot fail to find her appearance more attractive than that of his elderly mate. The girl proves to be of an intriguing disposition. Well, that sort of thing is bad enough at best; but under the time-honored system of marriage, the governess of intriguing disposition can be sent away, and — even if the husband prove so errant as not to relinquish his interest in her — at least the *foyer* is safe. What is more, this unlucky experience will have taught the wife to prevent such domestic misadventure in future.

But suppose such liberty of divorce as your self-styled reformers seem to urge. They would stop at nothing short of absolute freedom in the matter of elective affinities; that needs no discussion. The governess of intriguing disposition will be all smiles for the fatuous husband, and all smiles at the fading wife — the fading of whose charms may well be hastened by such vexation. The poor woman will weep in secret, which will

be unbecoming. She may have the artlessness to imitate some pretty detail of the governess's costume, which will evidently make her look ridiculous. She may so far forget herself as to complain, or even to plead; which will render her husband still more sensible of the coy charms of the governess with a turn for intrigue. And meanwhile this demure young person will be far too intelligent to rate her charms at anything less than their full value — legitimate marriage. One can see the whole pathetic story at a glance. It is needless to dwell on details. The infatuated husband applies for divorce. As a matter of course, he obtains it; to deny it would seem to the authorities a tyrannical denial of their cherished principle of liberty in marriage; according to them, marriage should subsist only so long as it remains agreeable to both parties concerned. The devoted wife, prematurely old from suffering and from her unfailing attention to domestic duty, is sent to live and die as she may on what may chance to be left of her inconsiderable dowry. The triumphant governess of an intriguing turn takes her place at the *foyer*, as its duly wedded mistress. A new family succeeds the old one, whose interests are thus utterly ruined. Anyone can see that such incidents must lead straight to social chaos.

It is possible that the vividness of my friend's

narration has betrayed me into some exaggeration of her hypothetical case. If so, it is a tribute to the art of her improvised discourse. For her story carried one with it unresisting. She did not pretend that it was true; but it was intellectually conceivable, to the most eloquent detail, and each new detail made it more like a reality. What is more, she appeared to feel that she was presenting to us a pathetic and valid argument in favor of the orthodox principles of marriage.

Of itself, no doubt, this little incident had no importance. Very likely it was forgotten in an hour by everyone else who happened to be present at the tea-table thereby enlivened. It has lingered in my memory not because it was exceptional, but for the contrary reason that it was so deeply, so typically French. Elsewhere than in France, such a discussion, at least under just these circumstances, would have lacked, I think, several of its salient characteristics. Throughout her vivid statement of an imaginary case this Frenchwoman was intensely, contagiously serious. She made one feel as if a great principle were really at stake; as if the occasion forbade any manner of levity; as if what we thought, when she had finished, would affect the future of society and of morals. It

was just such a tirade as we have been accustomed to think pieces of stage convention in the comedies of the younger Dumas. Again, her views concerning the subject in dispute defined themselves with the utmost precision. Not an outline was blurred, not a detail was neglected; you felt as if you had been privileged to look through an intellectual microscope inconceivably delicate in adjustment. Incidentally, too, her intellectual candor was uncompromising; she frankly recognized and plainly set forth a range of human error which the custom, and indeed the impulse, of an English or an American woman in similar circumstances would have disposed her to ignore or to veil. The French state of mind in this matter has no shade of conscious effrontery; neither has the English or American any conscious tinge of hypocrisy. There is a deep difference, however, between people, like ourselves, comfortably disposed to believe that things are as they ought to be until the contrary is shown, and people, like the French, who frankly recognize that things are as they are — in which truth they find no reason for pretending things as they are to be what they ought to be. The formal conventions of life are in many respects similar with us and with them. The difference is that we of English habit, never prying beneath the

conventions, do not value them merely as conventions, and hardly appreciate their full importance except in cases where we complacently find them to coincide with actuality. The French, on the other hand, look beneath conventions with uncompromising keenness, and candidly admit what they discern there. This, on the whole, they most honestly regard as far too dangerous not to be repressed by all imaginable insistence on conventional system. Conventions to them are not precisely truths, but neither are they pretences. They are the fortifications of society, neglected or abandoned only at the risk of social peril. In which consideration we may find something to explain my friend's impassioned animation when she stated her extreme uncompromising conclusions about the question of divorce.

Whatever she discerned was vividly distinct; the simile of the microscope comes to mind again. You felt amazed at the precision of her perception and at the intensity with which she concentrated her powers on the task. But, as with the microscope, — or with a telescope, either, if the comparison seem at all invidious, — the field of observation was rigidly defined. You could not have grasped what lay within it unless, for the moment, you had neglected what lay outside.

The very limitation of her sketch enabled her to make it masterly. At the same time this limitation prevented it from being comprehensive. The moment you stopped to consider her imaginary case, you could see that there was nothing to prove it typical, any more than there would have been if one who should wish to generalize about the heavens should base his reasoning on what he saw through a telescope directed to some single point thereof, undisturbed by the swimming passage of planets. And yet my friend would not have been so admirably French as she was, if she had not assumed her hypothesis to be comprehensive, and if the conclusion she drew from it had not appeared to her, at the moment, absolutely, universally, conclusively true.

For, as you come to know the French, you grow to feel that no quality is more deeply characteristic than their passionate devotion to what, in the widest sense of the word, we may call philosophy. The trait in question, which has its origin in an intellectual activity far beyond our habitual conception, involves immense divergence of opinion and of conviction. As every one knows, there has never been a people less disposed than these same French to remain contentedly unanimous. And their uncompromising love for precision of phrase has long made the term "philosophy"

suggest, at least among themselves, something not at peace with dogmatic religion. Philosophy, as I conceive it at this moment, embraces such cosmic and social conceptions as those to which they thus seem generally to confine it; it embraces as well, however, the scholastic definition of philosophy as the handmaiden of theology. The real distinction between devotion to philosophy like theirs and our habitual neglect of it lies in the fact that a Frenchman is rarely content until he has reduced his views of life to a system, and that, so long as affairs in this wicked world proceed with reasonable prosperity, we see no particular reason why we should trouble ourselves to think about them. We are content with commonplace, with common sense; the French are passionately, alertly eager to understand, to explain, to control.

Accordingly, whatever the shade of your French friend's opinion, you shall seek far for a Frenchman in whose heart two assumptions are not so rooted that they seem to him, as a matter of course, sanctioned by all the force of passionate emotion. The first is that life, in all its bewildering complexity, can be generalized. Every imaginable phase of it may be simplified if we will, until we can perceive it clearly, firmly, finally, in all the precision of fixed, immutable

system. How deeply this conviction is rooted in the temper of the French is evident from the substantial conservatism which underlies all the vagrant radicalism of their utterance in recent years. It is implied in their intense devotion to system in such external matters as those which we have considered together — the structure of their universities, their acceptance of national centralization, and the orderliness of their social structure. It appears even in that less obvious trait of their character touched on when we began our present attempt to understand them more intimately. Their personal reticence, in its marked contrast to their philosophic candor, implies, as we come to appreciate it sympathetically, their devotion to system. Even in the most friendly intercourse, they regard the vagaries of individual temper as subordinate to the larger truths, the general principles, which we must recognize and support as the true guides of life. The assumption that everything can be generalized and reduced to system lies at the very root of their emotional existence.

Along with this lies a second assumption, quite as dear to them: even though fact be unwelcome, they ardently believe that you must never shrink from acknowledging it. In this philosophic conviction there is noth-

ing at all to preclude the polite vagaries of social amenity. As is the case with any race where society has persisted long enough to make the inconveniences of earthly accident habitual, their respect for casuistry is instinctive; and their appreciation of the rudeness inseparable from excessive personal candor, in word or in act, is keen. The very fact that things are not always what they seem, however, is one to be candidly admitted. To see things as they are, before we can reduce them to system, is evidently a prime duty of intelligence. In this passion for fact, taken together with their passion for system, we may find, I think, an explanation of what we have been apt to feel the bewildering paradox of their national character.

For when we come to consider together these two almost equally ardent philosophic impulses, we cannot long avoid perceiving that they are contradictory. What is true concerning fact and system throughout human experience remains true as ever in France, for all the efforts of the French to reconcile them. No philosophical formula was ever so final as to include all conceivable fact. Unforeseen facts occur everywhere. Radium, for instance, seems at this moment to be irradiating unexplored regions among the placid generalizations of physical

science. And you cannot forever protect principles by the conventional assertion that an exception only proves the rule. For the essence of an ideal rule is that it shall be unexceptionable.

Now, when facts fail to agree with systems, you may take one of three distinct courses, besides this makeshift one of saying that the intrusive facts are only what everybody ought to expect; and French temper, with its impulsive love of precision, is even more disposed than ours to take one of the three. Either you may attempt forcibly to reduce fact to system; or you may virtually ignore fact, admitting it, if you like, but treating it as negligible; or, if fact prove too stubborn, the final course open to you is to reform your system, in order to make it correspond with fact. If your philosophic impulse persist, you must almost certainly take one of these courses in the end. Which you shall take in any given case depends on extremely complicated conditions, among others on the incalculable peculiarities and vagaries of your individual temperament. Which any Frenchman will take, it is hard to predict. The one sure thing is that, when his course is once chosen, he will take it so fervently that anyone who takes another will seem to him an enemy.

To illustrate what I mean, I may perhaps

touch on a matter which, as the whole world knows, was deeply disturbing every corner of French society at the time when I was in France. It still involved such intense feeling that one could not tactfully speak of it. All the more, one felt it close to the surface of emotion everywhere; and one felt, as well, that people of quite equal honesty — equally good gentlemen, I mean, in our best sense of the word — were to be found on both sides. From our present point of view, this was the most interesting phase of it. I refer, of course, to the Dreyfus affair. Amid all its confusion, two facts remained clear: one was that everybody, having come to his own conclusion about it, was honestly convinced that everybody who had come to a different conclusion was reprehensible; the other was that no foreign visitor, whatever his personal sympathy, could quite admit this to be the case.

For the dispute really turned, I think, not on questions of fact, but on one of principle. Everybody admitted that the established system of law, having regularly accepted certain statements of fact, had proceeded to condemn an individual who stoutly asserted his innocence. Everybody admitted that some contrary and unofficial statements of fact had subsequently

brought the justice of his sentence into question. In other words, it was plain that the regular working of a system did not agree with an alleged state of fact. What is more, efforts to suppress the alleged facts became out of the question. One of two courses must be chosen: Either the incompatible facts must be denied by the supporters of the system, very much as the Christian Scientists of America now deny malady, under the convenient name of "error," or else the system itself must be exposed to hostile scrutiny. The true question was whether the case should be reopened after sentence had been duly passed.

This seems to me the crucial point. The complications which ensued were embittered by controversy, until the mutual sentiments of Frenchmen grew as rancorous as those of Americans were during our Civil War of forty years ago. The reason for this animosity seems to me that both sides, with eager French love for logical system, regarded the question as an abstract one. To each it turned on unquestioning belief that a familiar legal maxim ought at any cost to be carried to its extreme conclusion. The difference between the parties was that, while both would probably have admitted both maxims, one held that the fundamental principle of public conduct

is *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum*, and the other that it is rather *De minimis non curat lex.* At bottom, I think, there were these two distinct impulses, neither quite precisely formulated, and both turning not only on political conviction and on social limitation, but also on peculiarities of individual temperament. One sort of man assumes, as a matter of course, that the rights of the individual should be maintained at all hazard, no matter what happens to institutions. Another sort of man believes institutions so needful for the welfare of society that occasional wrong to an individual — even though in itself deplorable — is of no importance in comparison with loyal maintenance of the system which has had the misfortune to inflict it. When a conflict between these contradictory assumptions takes place, it is sure to be violent anywhere.

More than anywhere else in France. The dispute once started, everyone seemed impelled to consider it much as my French friend, at whom we glanced a little while ago, considered the question of divorce. The fundamental position was assumed to be axiomatic, morally beyond dispute, sacred. Facts which seemed to justify the position — whether real or imaginary, or based on evidence, on hearsay, or on scandal — were eagerly pounced on. Principle and facts were

used in impassioned processes of logical reasoning. Whatever this reasoning might lead to — including the villainy of anyone who did not agree with it — became an object of faith. The actual point in dispute, at least as I apprehend it, was quite lost from sight. Yet, in final analysis, you could always reduce it to the question of whether the case ought to have been reopened. People whose faith in institutions was paramount thought not; to reopen it would be to question, to weaken the authority of the law, the army, the Church. In any given case, of course, the Church, the army, or the law might err; nothing on earth is free from danger of error. But the less we dwell on this, and the more we insist on the benefits we derive from such institutions, and on how fatally the weakening of them might injure civilization, the better for everybody. In comparison with the stability of society, the interests of any individual are negligible. *De minimis non curat lex.* In contradiction to this view, people who were disposed to care more for individuals than for institutions held that the only right course was to scrutinize afresh every fact in the case, old and new. If institutions had involved injustice to anybody, so much the worse for institutions. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.*

Of course, there were immense complications. Dogmatic attachment to different systems of religion or of politics entered into the matter. Catholics and Jews, Radicals and Reactionaries, naturally arrayed themselves against each other, and found in the fact fresh warrant for their belief that their opponents were villainous. And everybody was most bitter of all against people who on general principles should have taken his side, and who, whatever their reason, took the opposite. For, as we have seen, the choice of sides often turned on questions of individual temperament. Neutrality became impossible, until even an attempt, like ours, to consider the matter impartially, in distant perspective, may probably seem partisan to everybody concerned. In any event, if it should be brought to their attention, it would seem immensely incomplete — neglecting innumerable considerations essential to valid opinion concerning this complicated matter. Had our object been to arrive at any conclusion about the case, or even to state the facts plainly, we should certainly have had to consider it with more deliberation. Already, however, we have done enough, I think, for our present purpose. This was only to point out some deep characteristics of French temperament. From the very moment when the case was first brought

forward, the French took sides, with precision, with logic, and with intense animosity. Nothing in their recent history can better illustrate their characteristics when they are brought face to face with a situation where — in any sense of the terms — system and fact are shown to be so far at odds that readjustment is needful. They passionately love system; their alertness of intelligence makes them passionately fond of reasoning; they passionately desire to philosophize everything into order; yet all the while they insist with equal passion on recognizing fact. When fact and system clash, accordingly, the French are stirred to a degree which at once intensifies and unduly concentrates their processes of reasoning. And thus arise, throughout the course of their history, their tragic antagonisms of conviction.

For a Frenchman would be something more, or something less, than characteristically French, if at any given moment his convictions on any subject in serious dispute had not an intensity rare among other peoples. Whatever the question, his first impulse is to define his views of it. As a matter of conscience, his efforts to define them will not rest until they have resulted in a precision of which the very clearness involves limitation. If this were not the case, he could hardly be true to himself; if a bit untrue to him-

self, if not unflinching in his intellectual candor, he could not be an honest man. Almost unknowingly, then, he proceeds to make for himself a new little logical system. He honestly believes in it, at least for the while. He cherishes it, even to its remote implications, not only with instinctive devotion to his principles, but also with some such jealousy as that with which creative artists or parents cherish superficially unwinsome offspring. At any given moment he could not be himself if he were not uncompromising. To tolerate convictions or opinions contrary to his own would be to yield himself contemptibly to a contradiction of right and of truth, surely mischievous and often wicked.

If I have made myself clear, I have perhaps indicated how some of the most obvious peculiarities of the French, often puzzling to a foreigner, and surely less menacing to national strength than a foreigner would imagine, spring from an excess of their national virtue — intellectual candor. As individuals or as partisans they never quite appreciate the limitation, as distinguished from the precision, of their opinions and their convictions. The results of this are familiar to everybody. Superficially they take the form of *demonstrations*, amusing or alarming to foreign spectators, as the case may be. During the winter when I

was in Paris, for example, the teacher of history at a secondary school gave expression to some opinion about Jeanne d'Arc which offended the prejudices of his pupils, boys sixteen or eighteen years old. These youths accordingly hooted down his lectures, refused to attend his classes, and assembling in public places indulged themselves in comically eloquent tributes to the character of the Maid of Orleans. This particular incident, I believe, was settled by transferring the obnoxious schoolmaster to an institution of learning where the boys were more disposed to agree with his political bias; but when the characteristics displayed by these rebellious youths show themselves more profoundly among their elders, the matter cannot be so easily disposed of. Throughout French history they have involved terrible mutual misapprehensions on the part of men equally honest and equally admirable. More than anything else, I think, they have led to those fatally uncompromising dissensions which again and again have prevented tolerant cooperation at crucial moments. The deepest weakness of the French as a people seems to be their inability to take confidently united action. They know one another better than they can know any foreigners. That is one reason why their history has taken such a course that an English writer,

who knows them well, has lately declared, in discussing their republican doctrine of fraternity, that no Frenchman can ever hate a foreigner quite so intensely as he hates Frenchmen of other opinions than his own.

At a French dinner-party I happened to hear a phrase which, in this connection, seems to me deeply significant. It was during those disturbances about Jeanne d'Arc indulged in by schoolboys. Their master was believed to have intimated that, according to his reading of the evidence — duly confirmed by the decree of the ecclesiastical court which sent her to the stake — her character left something to be desired. His pupils, when you began to sift their eloquence, appeared to maintain — in accordance with the decree of the equally regular ecclesiastical court which rehabilitated her memory — that she was blameless to the point of beatitude. The question gave rise to animated, though friendly, debate among a company of French people assembled at table. Everybody there was alertly intelligent, everybody knew his history with surprising accuracy, everybody took eager interest in the somewhat academic controversy ; and the range of opinion extended from not guilty, through not proven, to guilty. In the midst of the dispute one of the company gave

utterance to a principle apparently accepted as axiomatic by everybody present: — "*Il n'y a qu'une vérité*," he exclaimed: "There is only one truth"; — a fact is a fact, or it is not; that is the whole story.

Everybody assented; and the discussion went on, so far as I remember, to no definite conclusion. For my part, I did not venture to interpose. Yet I felt at the moment, as I have felt ever since, that no incident could better have illustrated at once the uncompromising intellectual candor of the French, and the most insidious limitation of it.

Take, for instance, the case then in dispute, that of Jeanne d'Arc. Concerning her actual conduct in this world, of course, the aphorism was completely true. Either she was spotless, or she was not; and by carefully studying the evidence about her we may very likely reach, in the end, a pretty substantial opinion, one way or the other. But suppose for the moment that the weight of the evidence should prove to be against her; suppose that, as a matter of history, we were forced to admit her frailty. That would doubtless be a truth; and in her own time it might have been held pretty comprehensive. Nowadays, however, the case is different. It will soon be five hundred years since she gave up the ghost in the market-place of Rouen.

Throughout these five centuries a crescent tradition — a legend, if you will — has consecrated her memory. Even though she were proved in fact to have been worse than scandal ever pretended, nothing could prevent the equal truth that thousands and thousands of her countrymen have lived and died in the faith that she was the pure and inspired savior of France. But for that tradition, she might have been untainted as driven snow, and yet today be remembered only as a picturesquely eccentric soldier. That tradition itself, even if they could demonstrate that she was no better than the dregs of a mediæval gutter, is a fact which must still be reckoned with. There are at least two truths about Jeanne d'Arc — the truth of history and the truth of tradition. If they coincide, so much the better. If they prove hopelessly at odds, that is no reason why we should not reverence her traditional memory; for this consecrated truth is less concerned with what she actually was than with what generations of posterity have fervently believed her to be.

It is the same at home. On Boston Common there is a monument in honor of the victims of the Boston Massacre, a few years before the American Revolution. Some of our noteworthy authorities assert that they were drunken

rowdies. It is equally true that local tradition has long since come to believe that they were patriots who deliberately sacrificed their lives for the principle of liberty. If we take that monument as a tribute to the actual men whose names are carved on it, we might as well close our police courts. If we take it as an assertion of our popular tradition that they were devoted to what they believed the highest truth, it must always remain reverend. There is more than one phase of truth, after all; and the most deeply significant, the most lasting, the most pregnant, is not always that of mere reality. Oftener, I grow to feel, it is that of the ideal to which some fleeting reality — however sordid — has given inspiring and deathless life.

Such a distinction as this any thoughtful Frenchman would be apt to admit. Distinctions, even when not very fine, appeal to tempers so fond of exactness as that of the French. At the same time the sort of distinction now in our minds would hardly occur to them spontaneously. Their instinctive, impulsive love of system would prevent them from feeling its force until they had carefully considered it. There is something alluring in that phrase, to which the whole disputing company assented — *Il n'y a qu'une vérité.* Truth is single; it must forever

remain immutable, unqualified. Their system of the eternities is based on this axiom. To question it would be preposterous — until you stop to think.

And meanwhile, let truth be single as you please, and let each one of us, with all the candor in the world, set himself the task of learning it; and you shall always find human beings at odds. The more alike they are in fundamental character, the more sharp their dissensions must be, and the more intolerant they must be of one another. Let them love system and love fact, as the French do. Let them be beset by the temptation to admit fact only in forms which harmonize with system. Let them grow to maturity each amid the intense traditions of his class and kind. Let each, as well, be conditioned by the accidental fact of the temper, the character, the disposition, with which he happens to have come into the world. And the world he must live in must be, from beginning to end, a world of insoluble discord.

And yet, for all these dissensions which at once spring from their individualities and intensify them, you would never understand the temper of the French if you stopped here. The excess, the fineness, the limitations of their strongest virtues, involve them in constant un-

rest, passionately resentful of their own images in the likeness of their nearest neighbors. At the same time there are enduring impulses in which they remain unanimous. This tendency you can feel in some of the phases of their character at which we have already glanced. The very fact of their school-boy demonstrations reveals their eager response to the appeal of a common sentiment. In Asia, they tell me, French missionaries and the most radical of French diplomatists mutually ignore everything but the fact that both are loyal Frenchmen. And when a common sentiment proves to be broadly, deeply, lastingly human, it springs to life with wonderful strength and tenderness.

How full of tender feeling the French are must be evident to anyone who comes to know them in their family lives. A constant phase of this tenderness — this impulsive human sympathy, at its purest and most true in the presence of poignant experience inevitable in the course of nature — must be familiar to every traveller who lingers in France. Nowhere else does all the world, of every rank, respond with such instant, whole-souled, consoling sympathy to the presence of death. We are sometimes apt to think garish the conventional pomps of a French funeral. We should rather dwell in thought on

the gentleness with which the French bare and bow their heads throughout the streets while the sad procession passes. The impulse may be momentary, the act of sympathy forgotten almost before it is done; but the fact of it remains wonderfully significant. When, for a little while, the French can find themselves at one, in response to some deep human emotion, you may be sure that they are at one with singular intensity of tenderness. That is one reason why you grow to love them so well.

V

THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO LIFE

IN this effort to give some account of the French as I found them, I have followed, so nearly as might be, the course of my experiences in France. Beginning with the universities, my official connection with which opened my opportunities, I have touched on what I next came to observe, the structure of society; I have then told of that more intimate social fact, the family; and finally I have tried to make clear my impression of the French temperament, as these various phases of life in France revealed it to me. Our considerations henceforth will be of somewhat different character. We shall occupy ourselves with the manner in which this national temper displays itself in connection with some of the chief interests of modern French life, — literature, religion, and politics. And first with literature.

One thing must instantly be evident. French life and character, as we have here approached

them, have not appeared quite as foreigners, and particularly English-speaking foreigners, are accustomed to expect. At least in America, the French are supposed to be frivolous and unprincipled. And in our present considerations we have found them so remarkable for seriousness and for regularity that I may well seem to have been writing deliberately *virginibus puerisque.*

If I had been, I should not have written much otherwise. And here arises perhaps the most perplexing question which must beset anyone who, having been familiar with foreign prejudice concerning France, finds himself among French people in their daily lives. The France evident to casual travellers and generally set forth in such French literature as comes to foreign notice is very different from the France you come to know for yourself. The external aspect of them is identical, no doubt; just as the language is. In both, too, as everywhere else on earth, there is a regularly organized, orderly society, side by side with various vagary from social order. The true difference lies in the fact that those who know France from report are apt to suppose vagary to be the rule of French life, while those who know France from personal experience will probably agree that the most profound characteristic of the French is rather their conscientious

devotion to their regular duties. The question accordingly becomes that of how such divergent impressions can result from a common cause.

To begin with, we may well put aside some obvious reasons for the opinion usually held by foreigners. One general authority for it may be found in the gossip of tourists. It is honest, gleeful or indignant as the case may be, and reducible to a simple fact true of travel anywhere. No matter where a stranger may stray, he will see instantly the most irregular, the least respectable, the most broadly commonplace phase of the society which surrounds the hotel where he has taken up his momentary abode. Throughout the nineteenth century Paris has been perhaps the most attractive capital in Europe. It has attracted to itself, at least, more visitors than any other. More than any other, accordingly, it has developed into what seem permanently established forms those various catch-penny devices for the allurement of strangers which make any great city, in certain aspects, more like a mere watering-place than one always quite understands. In fact, however, the Paris of travel — the hotels and the theatres, the streets, the museums and the restaurants, together with endless other places of public entertainment — is the least Parisian, and the least

French Paris imaginable. It is only one more of the great places of amusement, open — for human good or ill — all over the world.

Not long ago a friend happened to tell me a bit of experience which just here may be illuminating. He was himself a respectable citizen of New York. Something had called him to Brazil, where, without personal introduction, he had passed two or three weeks at Rio de Janeiro. He had returned home with the honest conviction that there was not a decent human being in the whole Brazilian republic. Every prospect had been pleasing, but men and women had displayed an ultimate vileness of character in which the corruption of Europe and the crudity of America seemed indistinguishably blended. So Brazil was not sweet in the nostrils of this reputable American, who honestly believed that he knew Brazil from personal observation. The limits of his experience were startlingly revealed to him a year or two later. On a steamer going to Europe he had the pleasure of meeting a congenial fellow-traveller, of about his own age. This gentleman presently turned out to be a Brazilian, who had passed a month or so in America on his way to Paris. He had come to the United States as a stranger, with no means of access to society; he had spent a few days at the chief hotels of

our principal Eastern cities; and his honest conclusion, derived from personal observation, had been that nothing imaginable could exceed the social corruption of Boston and New York. Personal respectability he conceived unknown in either, just as my American friend had conceived it unknown in Brazil. On the voyage they grew to be great friends; and as each was blest with a sense of humor, they corrected each other's impressions instead of quarrelling about them. They parted happier men and wiser, having come to understand that what each had seen in the other's country was only what casual travellers must always find everywhere. Vice is less various, far less individual, than virtue. Of all commonplaces, it is the most irredeemably monotonous.

Once for all, then, we may put aside the disrepute of France so far as it comes to us from travellers' tales. It is no more French than it is Brazilian or American. We can hardly deal in so summary a way with another source of our impression of this deplorable social fact. Whoever has looked into the windows of French shops, where books and prints are displayed, whoever has glanced at such French comic papers, and the like, as stray into restaurants and barbers' shops, and into club reading-rooms elsewhere than in France, can hardly fail to have found

endless warrant for our conventional faith in French naughtiness. He may have been attracted; he may have been shocked; the one sure thing is that he will not have been enlightened. For full enlightenment, indeed, he will need an experience open only to those who come to know French people as they actually live. Then he will slowly grow aware that in decent French opinion this kind of publication is no more reputable than it seems to him, or to anybody else. It does not express life in any comprehensive sense; it is so far from expressing life, as life presents itself to Frenchmen of the better sort, that it does not even appeal to them. They ignore it, just as respectable Americans ignore the obnoxious advertisements of patent medicines so frequent in the cheaper sort of newspapers or on flaming bill-boards. The simple truth is that all over the world you will find disreputable objects of commerce, kept technically within the law. Those most obvious among ourselves are devices for encouraging teetotalers to drink adulterated alcohol; those most obvious in France are designed rather to encourage effrontery; but both alike, and all other such matters, are really to be classed together. Any American would be surprised and pained to find a worthy French family fuddling itself with one

of those proprietary nostrums which help debase country folks and tired shop-girls in so many parts of the United States. The sentiments of Frenchmen, when brought face to face with certain Parisian publications in the reading-rooms of American clubs, are said to be even more bewildering. They sometimes permit themselves to wonder, I am told, whether their surroundings can really be consonant with self-respect.

So far, accordingly, as our notions concerning the French may be traced either to travellers' stories or to objects of shady commerce, we may dispose of them once for all. They are simply stupid. Very clearly, however, this fails to cover the whole matter. What remains for us to explain is considerable. It consists of novels written by men who have attained the highest degree of personal recognition as serious masters of literature — a seat among the forty immortals of the Académie Française. It consists of plays which everybody in Paris, French as well as foreign, flocks to see, and eagerly discusses. It consists of that great body of literature — in many respects the most admirable of all modern times — which any student of modern French must eagerly and seriously study. Whoever has tried to teach French in American institutions of learning where co-education prevails, must have found

himself aghast. Countless writers who cannot be neglected will bring him before long to dangerous ground. In general, there can be no denial that the novelists and the dramatists of modern France set forth a state of society deeply different from that described in English or American works by writers of equal dignity. Any foreigner would naturally infer that the society on which their work is based must be far more corrupt than ours. Of course, it may be. In matters so intimate as this no one can ever feel sure of anything more than personal conviction. Beyond question, however, no one who is cordially received by the modern French would derive from his intercourse with them any such impression as we have all derived from what they write about themselves; and anyone familiar with society in modern England or America would probably find it about what literature had led him to expect. Our precise purpose now is to account, as well as we can, for this deep difference.

In trying to account for it we must soon remind ourselves of a fact asserted whenever this question arises. Throughout the modern English-speaking world, at least so far as living memory extends, there has been a general assumption that standard literature is addressed

to everybody who can read, — men and women, old and young, boys and girls. The very restiveness occasionally displayed by English or American writers in the presence of this convention only serves to define it. Most of us accept the limitations of it just as we accept those of the language in which we are forced to express our meaning as best we may. How completely different this assumption is from that of modern France, I may best indicate perhaps by a specific instance. After one of my lectures at the Sorbonne, a French lady, accompanied by her daughter, a girl of eighteen or so, did me the honor to present herself to me with a request for a little expert advice. The daughter, it appeared, had learned to read English fluently and desired to extend her reading beyond the classic novels of Cooper and of Sir Walter Scott. Could I name some contemporary works which she might find interesting? My impromptu answer took the form of a few hasty memoranda setting forth the names of some standard writers, and of three or four popular magazines. The good lady was perplexed. I could hardly have understood her, she thought; she had not asked me what authors were eminent, she had asked what books were suitable for a young girl; as to the magazines, she was right, she believed,

in supposing them to be addressed to the general public — in which case they were, of course, not the kind of thing she had in mind. I tried to explain that any young girl might range securely throughout the work of the novelists in question, and that our most respected magazines would not cloud the innocence of a nursery. My efforts seemed fruitless. She attributed my opinions, I think, to my obviously imperfect command of French. The fact that a popular literature could anywhere be addressed to a public so comprehensive as to include respectable youth seemed to her inconceivable. And how her daughter's education proceeded in the matter of English, I have never been privileged to know.

The public to whom French literature is addressed, in short, is always assumed to be mature. To grown-up people anywhere you may obviously say things unmentionable to children. *Maxima reverentia debetur pueris;* nobody questions that, either in France or among ourselves. The difference is that we are disposed to display our reverence for youth by excessive attention to our library shelves, and that the French display theirs by the more summary process of keeping the library door shut.

Such differences of national impulse as this are never without cause. The cause in this case

may be traced pretty readily to the different conceptions of education, and particularly of domestic education, entertained by the French and by ourselves. The fundamental question of education everywhere is how to prepare children for maturity. In English-speaking society, which, as we have seen, is far less systematic than that of France, this is held to mean that we must train them to make their way. In the much more systematic society of France, on the other hand, it seems rather to mean that we should fit them to take their places in the world. Slight as the difference between these assumptions may seem, it tends to widely different conclusions of principle. Everybody knows everywhere that all things are not what they seem. Everybody knows that preaching and practice can nowhere quite agree. Everybody knows that so long as civilization persists we must keep on both preaching and practising — bringing precept and practice into some semblance of harmony, each for himself, as best we may. We try to meet these conditions by giving our children the greatest degree of experience which is within the range of safety; the French prefer to surround theirs with the greatest degree of protection which is within the range of prudence. Each of us is prone to excess. Our children are sometimes left

too much to themselves; theirs sometimes appear distorted by undue control. You will feel the difference when you compare a French Lycée with an English public school. You will feel it just as much, and hardly more, when you compare a Yankee play-room with the children's corner of any French *foyer*. We try to make our children face fact, insisting less than we used to on abstract principle. The French still insist on principle, dissembling, so far as they can, discordant or unwelcome fact. We desire to develop the individual; with them the prime impulse is to maintain the social system.

In any such contrast as this it is hard to avoid the appearance of urging one side as better than the other. I have been trying not to do so. The reward of our methods is found, perhaps most surely, in the frank personal candor of our young people. The reward of theirs is found most surely in the deep intensity of their family affections. In each process there must be a stage disturbing and even alarming to people who believe in the other. But when we come to the end and ask ourselves which of the methods makes the better men and women, there is no answer. Each, honestly pursued, leads to the same result. What almost surely ends ill is an

attempt to train the children of either society in the manner generally upheld by the other.

Far as we may have seemed to stray from literature, we have only been reminding ourselves of one reason for the widely different assumptions concerning its function among ourselves and in France. Our whole conception of education implies our belief that literature should be addressed to everybody who can and will read it. Their whole conception of education implies their contrary belief that literature should be addressed only to those who have outgrown domestic supervision. Our custom compels more reticence than theirs. To each of us his own custom is bound to seem a law of nature. So they think our novels hypocritical, and theirs seem to us corrupt; and both of us are wrong.

When we foreigners fully agree that French literature is addressed only to mature people, we may, perhaps, begin to understand it better. One delightfully evident feature of it is clearly due to this fact. I mean the beautiful precision and finish of French style. Whatever a French writer's topic, he must never forget that his readers will be of such age and disposition as to be competent and scrupulous critics of his literary manners. When, like any English writer, you are addressing so widely general a public that

you cannot feel sure of their intelligence, you may permit yourself, even without quite realizing that you do so, considerable carelessness in expression. When, like all French writers, you are addressing only a mature and highly cultivated public, you must be more careful, even though you do not deliberately try to be, of duly accepted conventions. In consequence you will generally be more agreeable. Observance of convention is always pleasant; surprising people are not comfortable companions; good style is a phase of good manners. Our certainty that French books will be well written affects us like the certainty with which we expect and find civilized conventions in the homes of some of our friends, and not gladdening our essentially cordial relations in those of others. American books and English are not always careless; but you never know what to expect of them. Some, and parts of many, are delightfully written; some, inoffensively; most of them seem written anyhow. A kind of restless insecurity results each time we take up a new one. Our own life, our own style, are wanting in civilized grace and amenity. These qualities in the style of the French are very welcome to our foreign taste.

At the same time there can be no doubt that

these conventions of French style often impress us as artificial. At least in matters of form, the literature of France seems far less at liberty than ours to stray where it will. And the impression which it thus makes on us is strengthened by some obvious features of its substance. A novel or a play, for example, almost always presents definite pictures of social life. Take a scene from any standard comedy. A man enters to make a call on a lady. He wears his gloves and he carries his hat — circumstances evidently affording him opportunity for a little easy stage business with his hands. Obviously, we think, these details are literary conventions, like the pleasantly formal phrases with which he is received. Or a company is assembled, each in his own chair, and each takes part in the general conversation, with no symptom of such division into groups of two as is pretty sure to take place among ourselves. Again, we think, this is a piece of literary convention, pleasantly like that which requires these creatures of conventional imagination to talk in happier style than we are used to at home, and in English novels. There seems, too, on reflection, a sound artistic reason for the conventional regularities of French literature and the French stage. Nothing could more strongly emphasize, by contrast, the rather irregular lines of conduct

to which punctiliously decorous persons prove to be addicted.

As you grow to know France better, your notion of these conventions of manners will be quietly modified. Conventions they remain, of course, — matters of civilized system, as distinguished from momentary impulse. But they prove to be conventions of quite another character than you had supposed. They had seemed, like the conventions of style through which they were made known to you, amenities of literature, and hardly anything more. They turn out to be the accepted amenities of French behavior. The manners presented on the stage and in novels are photographically true to the social habits of the present day. You were right, no doubt, in supposing that gloves and a hat furnish an actor with easy business for his hands; but that is not the reason why he comes on the stage with them. A man enters a room with them throughout France; not to do so would be to make himself unceremoniously at home, almost to the point of scandal. You were right in supposing that conversation addressed to everybody within hearing is inevitable on the stage and convenient in fiction; but that is not the reason why you will find it everywhere in French literature. To talk to your neighbor in

a French drawing-room, instead of addressing the whole company, would be almost as uncouth as if at home you should plant your chin on his shoulder and whisper in his ear. These French conventions, at first blush so evidently literary, turn out to be conventions not of literature but of life.

Beyond question they are among the conditions which make French life agreeable. You will find them in all ranks of French society. What is more, you will find them in all degrees of French friendship, even to the domestic privacy of the *foyer*. You must stray further in France than ever I did if you would seek such unsocial carelessness of behavior as you shall often find at home without the seeking. Wherefore, you may safely conclude that French life in its daily detail is pleasanter than life among ourselves — far more deeply permeated with the graciousness of civilization. To find yourself, wherever you are, in a little company, — one of an affable group, — is a less perplexing experience than to find yourself in a collection of casual couples trying to think of something to say to each other. And yet you presently begin to perceive that this is not the whole story. More agreeable in any given instance, this precision of conduct tends to grow a shade mo-

notonous. The formal comedy of daily life in France repeats itself as interminably as the pleasant pictures of it on the French stage repeat one another. Though it never ceases to please, its charms soon fail to include the charm of novelty. One interior is so like the last, or the next, that when you have made six or eight calls in Paris, you will be at pains to remember which was which. The ease and the grace of French life depend on a degree of convention unfavorable to variety. Unless you pry far beneath the surface of daily life in that pleasant France, you grow to feel, it offers rather less scope for obvious individuality than you have been used to elsewhere.

Here at last we can begin to understand the full significance of an epigram which, a few years ago, startled a company of Americans assembled to welcome an eminent French man of letters. When the speeches of formal greeting were over, the after-dinner eloquence took a more familiar turn, and one of our own novelists ventured to ask the Parisian writer why the heroines of French fiction are so generally given to misbehavior. He could not believe, he politely added, that misconduct was general among the women of France; in reality, he could not doubt that French women are among the best creatures

a good God ever made; why should they not appear so in French literature? The French writer replied with that delightful ease of manner and of phrase which makes post-prandial discourse in France a matter rather of anticipation than of dread. Our friend, he assured us, could not have generalized French womanhood more happily if he had enjoyed the privilege of knowing from infancy how completely it justified the reverence in which all who understand it must hold it. And, in explaining why this aspect of it was not more salient in the long historical perspective of French literature, he could not find a happier phrase than one uttered under similar circumstances by his lamented friend, Monsieur Guy de Maupassant. When that most eminent of literary artists was once asked, in a familiar company, whether he might not some time gladden us with a heroine more sedate, if not more alluring, than those with whom we were all familiar, he had resolutely said, No — for "*l'honnête femme n'a pas de roman.*"

The idea that good women are not interesting baffled this company of intelligent Americans. They were familiar only with their own society, where young girls have their blameless romances as regular preliminaries to happy and faithful marriages, where good married women — young

and old — have their friendships and their interests, apart from domestic life, as innocent as the romances of their girlhood. To these Americans, accordingly, Maupassant appeared to assert that no woman could be interesting, in any aspect, until she took to mischief. This I conceive to be far from the true meaning of his epigram. His comment was concerned not with human character in general but with a state of society extremely different from that to which Americans are accustomed. We all know how deeply foreigners misapprehend our manners; few of us stop to think that we may equally fall to misunderstanding theirs.

Such social conventions as ours, or such lack of them, if you choose, — such freedom from fixed system, — make life, in its every-day aspects, a tolerably varied thing. Even the most innocent young girl properly has her little secrets, her pretty perplexities; and this with no disregard of the customs in which she has been brought up. Social conventions, on the other hand, so precise and so systematic as those of the French, go far to keep young girls and good women from such experiences as should avert the drowsiness of monotony. Our ideal of womanly conduct demands little more than rectitude and candor. Theirs demands that a good woman attend un-

remittently to the obvious business of her useful life. Each of us would probably agree in respect and admiration for the ideal most cherished by the other. Each might well believe that the ideal of the other was implied in his own. But the emphasis would differ, just as we have seen the emphasis of America to differ in other respects from that of France. And no matter how much Americans may prefer their own emphasis, they cannot deny that the emphasis of the French on obedience to conventional system must tend to prevent, in every-day life, that sort of individuality among good women which often makes them, among ourselves, happy subjects for literary treatment. The moment that we reach this point of view we can see — whether we resent the epigram or not — what a French novelist means when he declares that good women afford no opportunity to a writer of fiction.

The *honnête femme* of France, in short, is a devoted woman who has more things to do than waking hours suffice for. These she does cheerfully, faithfully, beautifully. She has the cares of her household; she is passionately devoted to her children; so long as her parents live, she is devoted to them as well; the interests of her brothers and her sisters are her own; more still her own are the interests, in every sense, of her

husband. She is the central fact in the national life of her country. But from the point of view of the story-teller her career is not interesting.

The essence of any interesting literary problem, indeed, may perhaps be reduced to this: it involves a conflict, more or less impelled by personal passion, between individual impulse and social surroundings. The question, in its simplest and most comprehensive terms, is one of adjustment between an organism and its environment. The more rigid the environment, the more sternly it represses and controls individual tendencies to variation. What would be normal in a society which cherishes above all the ideal of individuality becomes exceptional in a society which cherishes, with almost religious fervor, the ideal of system. When any question of individual variation from an accepted type declares itself in France, accordingly, it involves a far more abrupt divergence from general presumption than is necessarily, or even usually, the case among ourselves.

For various reasons, too, these exceptions to the rule of social life, interesting anywhere, make exceptional appeal to interest among the French. One condition of a systematic habit of life is that whoever is addicted to it must grow, by very force of habit, to feel it at once a phase of the

law of nature and, like other such conditions of existence, exasperatingly repressive. We human beings, compelled to live on the surface of the earth, would now and then like to soar in the air, partly because we know that if we could do so at will, we should be workers of miracles. And with people to whom, for generations, social restraint has been the unbroken rule of life, vagaries from such restraint, though not miracles, have a touch of miraculous fascination. When New England was given to godly austerities, small boys thought it a fine thing to say *damn;* nowadays, amid more relaxed surroundings, this expletive has lost its charm and is getting out of fashion.

Again, and far more characteristically, when such fixed lines of conduct as prevail in France become the regular rule of existence, they are bound to present themselves, to people who accept them, as generalizations. Any system tends to reduce itself to a series of propositions; and when propositions are once stated and received as true, it is not only in mathematics that we are disposed to regard them as universal. Now, the propositions which govern the social life of the French, even in their most whole-souled domesticity, have gone beyond any mere formulas of language. They have embodied themselves in the forms, the manners, the details of all terrestrial

habit. Take any French family, for example, whom you may have had the privilege to know. Every one of its members will have some stated occupation for every hour from morning till night. The old lady in Pailleron's comedy, who regularly makes her appearance in the drawing-room at four in the afternoon, might be taken, in this respect, as an incarnation of France. And, even among people who live in the simplest way, there is very little personal, as distinguished from domestic, privacy. A Frenchman's house is his castle, even more than an Englishman's; it is his own, inaccessible except to those whom he favors with the password of the day. But within it he is so little alone that, if he wants to be by himself, his only resource is some holy of holies, where he can lock himself in. Among his own family he has his open and regular part to play, as surely and as socially as the least of them. He plays it cheerfully, willingly, happily, as they play theirs. Human nature and human life generalize themselves unopposed. Love of system makes system the stronger, and the growing strength of system strengthens the love for it with all the security of habit.

Amid such strength of beloved environment, the persistent tendency of human nature to variation presents something more than a specific

problem; it gives rise to many general considerations, which people unused to such conditions would hardly suspect. One reason why this is not instantly evident lies in the fact that, whether in literature or in life, any individual variation from an accepted type — any assertion of personal independence from the control of accepted custom — is bound to seem peculiar to the individual involved. Otherwise human beings would be no more stimulating facts than algebraic symbols or tin soldiers. The precision of the French mind, too, demands that when the problem of any such variation is presented in literary form it shall be stated concretely. You must read far in standard French novels or plays before you shall discover there a character who shall not seem to be somebody in particular as distinguished from somebody in general. And yet, all the while, this individuality, this vivid personality, of the characters in French literature or on the French stage is itself a matter of convention. It is a phase of the same mental habit, the same immemorial tradition of expression, which makes the style of France so admirably, so brilliantly precise. In point of fact, you will find, these characters — vividly individual though they be — are accepted by the public for whom they are imaginatively created not quite as individuals,

but far more instantly as types, as abstractions, as terms to be used in social reasoning rather than as objects of sympathetic contemplation.

What I have in mind must be familiar to anybody who has heard French people discuss current literature among themselves. You make a call in Paris, for example, and find six or eight people accidentally gathered together in a pleasant drawing-room. They prove to be talking about a play just brought out at one of the better theatres. You have happened to see it — with alert interest, and at the same time with a distinct emotion of such sort as used to impel the English of French caricature to summarize their impressions of the Parisian stage in the single word *shocking*. Rather to your dismay, some of the ladies present appear to have shared your interest without a tinge of your emotional reaction. They say acute things, which would never have occurred to you, about details of the acting. You begin to perceive the standard of art to which a French actor is held by the critical intelligence of his public. In reflecting on this aspect of the situation, you forget for an instant your Yankee displeasure at the lines of conduct which these admirable histrionic artists had called to your attention. You lose the thread of the conversation. When you try to catch it again, you

find that it has led to another phase of the drama in question. These excellent women — there are no young girls in the company — are no longer discussing the art of the actors; they are eagerly expressing their opinions concerning what the characters in the play were about. And here comes your enlightenment. To you the situation in question had seemed vividly individual; Armand was Armand, Germaine was Germaine. To them, for all the precision of the terms which set forth the loves of Armand and Germaine, the situation had evidently seemed generalized. You had been thinking of it in arithmetical terms; to them the terms had rather been algebraic. It is ten to one that where you would have said *Armand* in discussing the situation, they will say *a man;* that where you would have said *Germaine* they will say *a woman*, or *a wife*, or *an honest woman.* Before you have quite realized this difference, the conversation will very likely have pursued its way still further. It will have generalized itself, you hardly perceive when and how; and these volatile people will be gravely, animatedly, yet dispassionately discussing an abstract problem of psychology, of conduct, of morals. That now and again they revert to a man or a woman, to Armand or Germaine, does not alter the case. What has really interested them, what they will discuss

until some more apposite topic distracts them, might just as well have been suggested by a sermon, or by an open lecture at the Sorbonne, as by a dramatic performance which had seemed to you, in certain respects, abominable.

In almost every instance, meanwhile, at least nowadays, such general discussions as arise from novels or plays will be found to turn on the fundamental point which we have been trying to keep in mind. There is a fixed system — social, religious, moral, whatever you will. The accepted conventions of this would relentlessly repress the impulses of some individual; and very probably they would go far, at the same time, to repress or to contradict some impulses common to the human race. To make this situation clear, an author has stated it in concrete terms of Armand and Germaine. Armand and Germaine, however, bear to the point at issue no more comprehensive relation than that borne to a proposition in geometry by the figure used to illustrate the reasoning involved. They are necessary to the process; but once so used, they remain important only for the precision of line with which they may have been drawn. The real question is whether, in a case where the rigidity of system and the impulse of human variation are at odds, the system or the individual should yield.

Obviously and everywhere assertions of individuality are apt to take licentious form. You may illustrate this truth, if you prefer, by blameless reference to the poetic license indulged in by men of letters impatient of academic restraint. How far from dreary such purely literary discussion may become in France anyone knows who has read of the devotees of classic tradition endeavoring, when "Hernani" was new, to suppress the unorthodox metaphor,

"Vous êtes *mon lion*, superbe et généreux."

Without appreciating episodes like this you can never understand the French point of view, when systems and individuals, organisms and environment, come in conflict. But all the distraction of your attention in the world to poetic license can never avoid the truth that the questions of license involved in such conflicts are apt rather to involve license of personal conduct, such as our English habit is disposed not to talk about in general society.

Just here we are confronted again with the deep contrast between the intellectual candor of the French and the personal candor of English-speaking peoples. In certain respects, one sometimes conjectures, the French are less scrupulous concerning statements of concrete fact than

our own convictions would generally approve. When, on the other hand, the matter in question is either a general proposition, or the implications which it involves, they become unflinching. With us the case is precisely the opposite. In discussing concrete fact we mercilessly demand truth from ourselves and from everybody else; but when it comes to scrutinizing general propositions, we permit ourselves a degree of mental indolence regrettable in the eyes of our alertly intellectual neighbors; and when the further question arises of what our general propositions may logically imply, we are not only disinclined to think it out, but even resentful if we are pressed to do so. In a specific case, the right sort of a Frenchman might be rather more disposed than we to assert the spotlessness of a lady who had the misfortune to be discovered in an equivocal situation; on the other hand, he would be far more ready than we to admit the unhappy truth that wherever men and women are gathered together equivocal situations frequently occur. So the French, to the end of time, will think us hypocritical; just as we, with equal error, shall think them mendacious.

It is in no small degree this intellectual candor of the French which permits them, throughout their literature, to deal with topics on the

whole forbidden among ourselves. Among other things, it leads them to assume as a matter of course what is everywhere true, namely, that the most instantly suitable subjects for literature are not the commonplaces of every-day life. Otherwise a shopkeeper's ledger might serve the purpose of a novel. Literature, in general, must concern itself with interesting exceptions to the commonplace. Of these the most interesting, on the whole, arise from the vagrant tendencies of affection between men and women. If such incidents were not exceptional, they would not be interesting; you can imagine a state of society where monogamy might have all the fascination of romance, but that is not the society of European civilization. To deny these general truths would be, from the French point of view, perverse; worse still, it would be silly.

Meanwhile, there can be little doubt that another reason why the substance of French literature misrepresents French life may be found in another phase of French attachment to tradition. The intellectual candor of the French, their insistent admission of generalized fact, is no new trait of theirs; it has persisted ever since they have been a nation. And though in its present form, which happens to be intensely serious on the surface, it may seem different from what it used

to be, the nature of it stays much the same. The old folk tales of France, and the like, are full of ribald fun — "*gaieté gauloise*," they sometimes call it now. France has always had its systems, and has always admitted the persistent recurrence of exceptions. Of old it used to laugh at them; just now it is disposed rather to philosophize about them. Whether you laugh or whether you reason is a question of mood. What they reason about now is what they used to laugh about, and what very likely they will laugh about again in days to come. In any event, it is not only something which their intellectual candor must admit to be of perennial human interest; it is something which the immemorial convention of their race has assumed to be the normal subject of literature. The frailty of woman is as old as Eve, and the place of it in French literature has analogies to the place of Harlequin in Christmas pantomime.

All of these considerations should help us toward the end of which we are now in search — the understanding of why the life of modern France, when you come to know it, seems so different from the same life as set forth in the most highly developed literature of modern Europe. We have seen that convention has much to do with this paradox. We have seen, as well,

that it springs in no small degree from the insistent intellectual candor of the French. We have seen that this candor, or any semblance of it, involves the admission that the subject of literature in general should rather be interesting exceptions to a rule than the rule itself. And thus we find ourselves led toward a conclusion, or at least a suggestion, astonishingly remote from our original assumption. There is reason, in short, for believing that the pervasive licentiousness of literature in France so far from proves licentiousness to be the rule of French life that it may rather be held to imply the reverse.

Another consideration, on which we have not yet touched, should strengthen this conclusion. As the whole world knows, the French are not a sluggish people. They are probably the most alertly intelligent in the modern world, and this both from native impulse and from the training consequent upon the circumstances of their intensely competitive life. The intensity of their competition, so evident in the details of their university system, demands incessant, unremittent, intellectual work. So does their attachment to their social system. A good Frenchman must not only do his utmost to maintain and to advance his own position in the world; he must occupy himself as well with the interests of his

family. He must provide for the careers of his sons; he must provide for the dowries of his daughters; he must see to it that his household, large or small, is conducted prudently; he must end each year in a little more security than he enjoyed when he began it. He can never remit his attention to detail. Well and good. This means that when the day's work is over he would not be human if he were not pretty well tired out. He needs amusement, diversion, distraction, recreation. To recruit his powers of attention, he needs something different from what has engaged them yesterday and today, and must engage them again tomorrow. He would not be French, either, if he did not demand this stimulating distraction in a rigorously precise form. He is more fond of generalization than we are, I dare say; but he likes to base his generalization on concrete terms, and on concrete terms of a kind which shall readily hold his tired attention. And what is true of him is just as true — perhaps more true still — of his honest and devoted wife. She would not be French, again, any more than he would, if she lacked the strong habit of an intellectual candor which at once admits the existence of things we Englishmen or Americans are apt to ignore, and maintains the perhaps deplorable but surely undeniable

truth that such things have an enduring power of exciting interest, of holding the attention, of making us forget for the instant such monotonies as have engaged us all day and as must engage us again, day after day, until the melancholy day arrives when they send out notice of the funeral. As a mere matter of recreation, the French demand in their literature something different from what they find in life—just as Yankee factory-girls like to read about duchesses. They turn instinctively to the ranges of fact least familiar in their daily experience, and least likely to strain their attention. Obviously such a range of fact is apt to be licentious.

A vivid instance of what I have in mind was lately told me by a French friend who has lived for some years in America. During a visit to Paris, he strayed into a small popular theatre, frequented by petty shopkeepers and the like. At his side he found a stout, motherly person, whose daily duties were evidently absorbing; for he could not help overhearing her voluble discourse about housekeeping, the shop, and the children; where you could buy your groceries cheapest, what promised to sell well or ill, in terms of pocket-money, and whether it was necessary to buy Louis a thicker pair of shoes, in view of his tendency to colds in the head. The

curtain rose. The one-act play proved to be of a freedom which, after my friend's prolonged habit of America, impressed him as appalling. The good matron by his side felt no such scruples. Beyond question, it was very funny, and you could not help attending to it. She laughed with a merriment which did your heart good. And when the curtain fell, to rise again in due time for a farce as unrestrained as the first, she filled the interval with the same sort of devoted domestic chatter as had served her for prologue. A good soul, tired with assiduous attention to duty, she found innocent pleasure — and nothing else — in giving herself up to what honestly amused her. You could no more feel her to be depraved than you could feel a pretty girl to be, delighting in the waltz.

The phenomenon is not peculiar to the French. A famously austere American senator, remarkable for conscientious work in Congress, was lately asserted by a librarian to have been in the habit of reading himself out of torpor in books which would have made his constituents and his family shudder. This does not mean that he ever relaxed his conduct, for an instant, either in public or in private; it rather proves the contrary. So, I believe, the persistent irregularities of conduct incessant in French literature may

most sensibly be regarded as the intellectual counterparts of lives benumbing in their general regularity.

One phase of this regularity must often surprise a foreigner who finds himself in a company of Frenchmen familiarly talking to each other. I can best illustrate what I mean by an anecdote told me by an American in Paris. He liked to read French novels, and believed himself by no means squeamish. Certain incidents in the works of one popular French author, however, had been too much for him. The man, he had been given to understand, was personally respectable. It seemed incredible. He put him on his unwritten *index expurgatorius*. Wherefore, he was startled one evening to find himself sitting next to this deplorable person at a dinner-party. The aspect of the novelist was irreproachable. His personality and manners were attractive. The talk was general and animated. It began with the soup, and kept on till late in the evening. All the company, but my friend, it happened, were French. He took little part in the conversation, partly for want of command of their fluent language. To all appearances, they talked with perfect freedom, saying whatever came into their heads. The novelist talked most of all. My friend avers that he never passed a more

delightful evening. And it was only after he got home that he quite appreciated an astonishing fact. Through all the hours when these Frenchmen had been talking together, not a word had been uttered which might not have been uttered in the presence of a young girl. So far as my friend's memory could serve him he had never enjoyed quite this experience among any company of English-speaking men. He reminded me, with a sigh, of a line from an imitation of Elizabethan comedy in which I had indulged myself some years ago: "When knew you a company of men left to themselves but that straight they fell to talking bawdy?"

And yet not only the novelist who had been the leader of this animated talk about politics, and fine art, and philosophy, and travel, had written things which no self-respecting American would sign; others in the company had sinned likewise, if not so deeply. The conclusion at which my friend arrived I am inclined to think true. The French are given to writing things which they would not say; English-speaking men are given to saying things which they would not write. Comments on a truth like this may be various. Six of one, you might conclude, and half a dozen of the other; it is only that people of decent life approach things differently, accord-

ing as they are familiar with the customs of French society or of ours. A good American woman in whose presence I ventured to make this remark declared it to signify, in absurdly minced words, that all the men in question ought to be ashamed of themselves. I should be the last to deny this proposition as a matter of principle. I refrained from pointing out to her that if I had assented to it as a statement of fact I should have exposed myself — at least in the just opinion of such intellectual candor as prevails among the French — to the charge of English-speaking hypocrisy.

Still another consideration may throw light on the conventional subjects of literature in France. As we reminded ourselves when we were discussing the structure of French society, the artists of France — using the term artists in its most comprehensive sense — are a class apart. With us the word artist suggests a man who devotes his life to the art of painting. In French, I believe, it has hardly any such limitation; it implies, to begin with, only that a man's life is devoted rather to contemplation and expression than to the kind of labor which the political economies of my youth used to call productive. An artist's effort is not to increase the wealth of society, but to enlarge its intelligence, and above

all to intensify its æsthetic pleasure. Painter, sculptor, architect, musician, actor, man of letters — it is all one. There are grades, no doubt, in the hierarchy of art, just as there are in the learned professions or in the army. At one time one service may be the more in fashion; at another time the same may be the less favored. These shades of difference do not obscure the great difference of all. The world of fine art in France is a world by itself with a pretty distinct existence of its own.

Artists may be of noble origin; oftener they come of *bourgeois* stock; sometimes they spring from the common people. Once artists, they belong first of all to their own class — I had almost said their own caste. In their art they are consummately serious, untiringly industrious. In superficial aspect, their lives are as orderly, as regular, as punctilious as the lives of anybody else. Beneath the surface, however, the question of regularity is in many aspects a matter of more indifference than is the case with people of similar character among ourselves. I permitted myself to compare this state of things with what we generally recognize in America to be the case with the dramatic profession. So long as an actor plays well and conducts himself agreeably, we ask fewer questions about him than about

other people. And if our taste lead us away from a society where questions might perhaps be awkward, we are not quite disposed to cultivate his acquaintance in private. This is no reflection on his numerous excellences of heart. It is only a candid admission that his standards of daily conduct will probably differ — for better or for worse — from those which we have happened to find most congenial.

The case of a father and a son almost equally eminent in the French literature of the nineteenth century will illustrate what I mean. Among the perennial books are the novels of Alexandre Dumas. If you ever think them trivial when you are well, turn when you are ill to "Monte Cristo" or "The Three Musketeers," and you will never want other diversion. As is generally known, the life of Dumas, while full of amiability, was not conspicuously austere — a fact which has no more bearing on the charm of his narrative than the personal morals of an opera singer have on the quality of the notes produced by her vocal organs. You would not have chosen him as private tutor for your sons, no doubt; there it ends. The whole world may forever enjoy his animated romances. You may feel, however, a shade of embarrassment if they ask you too definitely about his son, the younger

Alexandre Dumas. His origin, regular in the course of nature, was not preceded by all the legal formalities conventionally assumed among ourselves to be preliminary to such incidents; and the circumstances of his youth were such as to find normal expression — at an age when most of our boys are still at college — in "La Dame aux Camélias."

Whatever the ultimate moral of this classic work, no one can deny its astonishing power, nor yet that this power springs from two qualities deeply characteristic of its author. It enlists your sympathy for the moment; without stopping to inquire whether you approve of these people, or agree with them, you understand them and share their griefs. More conspicuously still, it is apparently serious; it discusses matters with intense gravity. In this aspect it could hardly be outdone by any sermon.

Both of these traits persisted throughout the admirable artistic career of the younger Dumas. What is more, as he grew in maturity he became the serious expounder of a moral code as simple and as sound as you should find in any orthodox Sunday-school. He preached it, no doubt, in terms of his own, instinct with the animation inseparable from lasting literary work in France. He preached it, too, with something of the fervor

which animates the spirits of converts or of moral discoverers. The commonplaces of our nurseries blazed for him with the splendor of new, self-revealing truth. His career as an artist was honorable, conscientious and distinguished. It was remarkable for popularity, for endurance, and for recognition. Among the members of the Académie Française in his time hardly any was more widely known, or more secure in public esteem. As a man of letters, he commanded not only admiration but respect; and I have been given to understand that he commanded them equally from those who had the privilege of knowing him in private life.

Yet, from the "Dame aux Camélias" to "Denise" and "Francillon," he set forth his principles in terms of social surroundings and conduct conspicuous for irregularity. He rose from a world of frank disrepute, through that ambiguous society to which he gave the name of *Demi-monde*, to the established social system of the middle and the upper classes of France. Throughout he showed you everywhere the mischief which must ensue from misbehavior, and showed it by means of pitiless detection and analysis thereof. Partly, no doubt, this was a matter of his art, due to the conditions which we have already taken into account. Partly, on the other

hand, it seems a question of his own personal experience. Born in the artist class, he lived in it, worked in it, and attained in it a dignity respected not only in Paris and in France, but all over the world. Yet the facts of his personal career might almost be inferred from the subjects of his art, as we recalled them a moment ago. Much of his life was passed amid surroundings where vagaries of conduct are more usual than most of us habitually find them. This would have been true of any actor among ourselves; it has nothing whatever to do with his personal character or principles. It is true, in general, of all artists in France — from the Academy to the cafés of the Champs Elysées. Anybody, artist or not, must generally assume as normal the phase of life he knows best. Thus we have found another, and a different, reason for the range of topic which pervades French literature.

And yet, after all, it is possible that we have long been straying too far afield. We have been trying to account for the wide differences between French life as one finds it and French life as it is set forth in the literature on which foreign notions of France are based. We have discovered for this difference various reasons — traditional, psychologic, social. Very likely we might better have illustrated it by an analogous difference,

equally obvious to any foreigner who should first travel in America and then come to know Americans as they are. If I may trust my own experience, after more than one journey abroad, the most salient literary fact in America, when you view things with a fresh eye, is the prevalence of newspapers. You see them everywhere, in everybody's hands; and of late the custom of filling space with huge headlines has so flourished that you cannot help remarking what they offer as the principal subjects of interest. When I last returned to Boston, after a year's absence, this happened to concern the identity of an unhappy girl whose body had been discovered in two or three separate packages floating about the harbor. Day by day the accounts of this incident were copiously illustrated in the newspapers which confronted you in every public place. It may be taken as typical. Murders, burglaries, elopements, accidents, rascalities stare you in the face, in monstrous type, morning, noon, and night. Railway trains are full of people with their noses buried in these savory sheets. Any stranger might well infer this America of ours to be a land where his most respectable neighbor would probably be a pickpocket. Wealth here appears to be regarded as the result of robbery applied to purposes of deliberate corruption. Political eminence

seems to be, at best, demagogic arrogance devoting itself to oppression of the deluded poor. The principal occupation of those who purvey food is presented in the light of an endeavor to strike a working balance between rapacity and poisoning. And so on. I do not intentionally exaggerate the probable impression produced on any foreigner by the muck-raking and the yellow journals now so popular throughout the United States of America.

In the matter of taste, nothing can be said for this phase of depravity. Psychologically, on the other hand, it is both interesting and instructive. It is only a vulgar example of the same human impulse which, in anything but vulgar form, may be detected in the topics most frequent throughout the standard literature of France. The inference to be drawn from it is not that you are in the presence of a society so corrupt as to be obviously on the verge of dissolution. It is rather that tired human beings, fatigued by lives of conscientious regularity, find diversion in contemplating something different from the monotonies of their daily routine. Literature affords them this chance. In France, the literature has great intrinsic merit; in America, it has only the ephemeral vivacity of popular journalism. In both cases its relation to every-day life is about

the same. It sets forth irregularities, for the purpose of counterbalancing the benumbing torpor of recurrent regularity. If you imagine otherwise, you will fall into the fatal error of supposing the exception to be the rule.

At least, I hope, the manner in which I have tried to set forth this analogy will serve to define my purpose. This has not been in any sense apologetic. I have not meant either to commend or to condemn the subjects most frequent in French literature, any more than I have meant to praise or to blame the course at present taken by the daily newspapers of America. I have attempted only to point out the likeness between a paradox which we all understand and one which has generally misled us. American life is not such as American newspapers would lead a stranger to infer. Neither does French life seem such as strangers infer who know it only from French novels. In each case the facts set forth are substantially true; in each case they are comparatively unusual; in each the vast strength of social regularity is, for the moment, ignored. In each, as one grows to know the nation better, this strength proves so vital, so incessant, that in generalizing the life which it animates one is apt to think of little else.

For human life everywhere is a conflict be-

tween good forces and evil — constructive and destructive. It is the same with physical organisms, with moral, with social. Without the evil it could not exist; without the good it could not persist anywhere.

VI

THE QUESTION OF RELIGION

SO far we have touched little on matters of controversy. I have tried to give some account of the means by which the French temperament was brought to my knowledge — of the universities, society, and family life. I have tried to analyze this temperament — if analysis be not too pretentious a term for my attempt to point out how the intense love of system prevalent in France combines with the intellectual candor of the French to excite incessant, honest, passionate mutual misunderstanding among them. And I have done my best to explain why the impression of modern France which any stranger would derive from French literature is different from that which he would derive from personal contact with the French life of today. It would be inconceivable that my comments should command everybody's agreement. They have involved too intricate a combination of opinion with fact to avoid vagary and perhaps serious error. But they have not brought us to dangerous

ground. At worst, they have been efforts to make ourselves sympathetically understand the nature of an intensely interesting foreign people, strange yet friendly, instantly and incessantly attractive. In such case, errors of observation or blunders of opinion, even if not quite negligible, should lead to nothing more disturbing than friendly critical correction.

With the matters to which we now come, the case is different. Religious questions and political, even when they chance not to seem burning, are never free from a smouldering fire, which at any moment may burst into flame. This is particularly the case among a people so intense as the French in devotion to system. And there has rarely been a period in their history when discussion of religion or politics has stirred them more deeply than is the case now. There are far-reaching questions at issue, serious principles at stake. To earnest men engaged in such controversy, the lines seem sharply drawn, as was the case among ourselves, forty years ago, during the terrible national trial of our Civil War. Whoever believes himself right in his conclusions must inevitably believe himself morally right, ready to sacrifice all things else to some absolute higher law. Whoever is thus inspired must need more self-control than most of us can exert if he would

conceive opponents to be anything but wicked — perhaps perversely, more probably with a deliberate blindness which enhances their deserts of indignation. It is hard, accordingly, to approach such questions at all without seeming to take sides. The more impartial one tries to be, the greater one's danger. For when you take neither side, in any passionate controversy, each side will generally hold that you are taking the other.

Yet nothing could be further from my purpose, or indeed from my just pretensions. It was as a friendly visitor that I knew the French during the year I passed among them. Throughout that year questions of religion and of politics, deeply intermingled, were obviously burning. They were confused, too, and complicated. Friends who were equally cordial, and who equally commanded my respect, took opposite sides. To have believed either side wholly in the right would have been to fail in sympathy with the other. That would have demanded far greater knowledge, far more experience than mine. The one experience I found unavoidable, incessant, stimulating, was that of perceiving how the French temperament was affected by questions which stirred it to the depths. Certain considerations, broadly general, thus came

to form themselves in my mind; and they have since tended to grow somewhat more definite. It is these, and nothing more final, which I shall try to set forth.

To begin with, one can hardly come to know the French as friends without acknowledging them to be, as a people, genuinely and deeply religious. This term itself may be misleading. It is apt, anywhere, to associate itself so closely with the formulas of some precise creed that, with any of us, it may half unconsciously begin to imply them. To a native Yankee, who can still remember old times, for example, the word "religious" can hardly fail to suggest a more or less willing habit of listening to two long sermons every Sunday, and of saying your prayers before you get into bed. Such associations, reverend and helpful though they may often be, somewhat distract us from the fundamental fact which the word, in its wider sense, must everywhere stand for.

We human beings pass our little years of mortal consciousness in a sunny, shadowy world of which we know not either the beginning or the end. We waken, as we grow, to knowledge of the facts about us — our fellow men and the conditions which surround us all. We come, perhaps, to understand something more than our own

experience could tell us. History, for example, and science bring us face to face with men and with affairs, with strange aspects of life, of matter, of force, such as could never have revealed themselves to us in the flesh. But, far as these enlightening perceptions may go, they can never take us beyond the state we may best understand by recalling our crescently conscious childhood. A child finds himself in a world where he can seem to control a little of the immensity surging all about him — his toys, perhaps, and his little brother. More of this immensity must control him — his parents, their means, the horse which he can drive if harnessed, but which proves too big for him to bridle. Beyond the little circumstances of his daily life, there lies for him infinitude. It lies beyond us all — everywhere, no matter how far any of us may fancy that he has forced his way toward it. And death is about us everywhere, indefinite, inexorable ; they tell us that it awaits the planet, as surely as it awaits any fly whose buzzing may worry us. Earth itself has only a little while of conscious and separate existence, comparable to such existence as we know, each for himself. But mortality does not comprise everything. In mortal space there are stars beyond stars, moving together in obedience to some vast immensity of force. Beyond

them, as beyond the little child, surges something else, forever inaccessible to merely human ken. What it is we may never know; but we may always believe. The beliefs of humanity, as they have phrased themselves in creeds and systems, have been numberless. They have ranged from adoration of brute beasts to the most ethereal concepts of mystical philosophy. The truth which inspires them all reveals itself in the simplest, the most inevitable of human perceptions. There is beyond us all an influence more vast, more potent than we can ever be. Recognize this, and you will know what religion means.

The terms in which you express your religion may well seem terribly mistaken to other men, just as theirs may seem to you. Throughout history, the devotees of one creed bow down to the devils of the next. What the passing fashion of our time calls the course of religious evolution is everywhere marked by the fragments of dethroned idols, be they stocks and stones, or mere formulæ of language, dead and dying. But religions, even though outworn and abominated, are religions still. They leave their traces, too; which shall guide you everywhere to the gates of eternity. In moods like this, forgetting all else, you find yourself on the same threshold whether you

be penetrating the dim halls of some deserted temple on the Nile, or watching the sunset glow on the ruin of the Parthenon, or reading the English Bible, or marvelling at the vital exuberance of some soaring French cathedral.

A deep intensity of vitality makes the religious architecture of old France more memorable than any other in Europe. You may well forget the details of structure and of ornament, dear to lovers of historical monuments. You may find the images even of the masterpieces fused or fusing in your fancy, till they grow flickering, phantasmagoric. They will never fade into lifelessness. Rather, you grow always more wonderingly aware of how measureless was the aspiration of mediæval France. Even the ponderous arches of the oldest time do not bend under the weight they were made to bear. Instead, they lift themselves upward, bursting into crescent efflorescence of rude, splendid sculpture. They thrust their points skyward, soon; letting the light of heaven stream through the lancets and the wheels which open, like flowers, in the thinning walls. The spaces fill themselves with glories of color, enriching the very sunshine with austere images of patriarchs, of saints, of angels, of the Blessed Virgin, of Our Lord himself. The aspiration ranges higher and higher still, unweary-

ing, superhuman. The groins and the arches, the traceries and the carven flowers, writhe like leaves or tendrils, until they begin to lose the strength they once drew from roots deep in the heart of solid earth. You feel them trembling, quivering, vanishing at last. Yet all this luxuriance of growth has still surged upward. It is as if you had watched the life of some forest tree, miraculously comprising within the scope of human sight the years and the ages of its increase from sapling to giant, alive to the very tip of each quivering leaf. The end of growth must come, of course; but when you have watched to the end, your eyes are still turned more searchingly than ever towards the heavens above and the eternities. The splendor of the exuberance which has distracted them a thousand times only reminds you of what exhaustless vital force was needful to inspire growth so incessant, so deathless even in ruin.

Fantastic enough, all this; yet nowise untrue. You may smile at the fancy if you will; but you cannot deny it. You may repine to find that it is at once so commonplace and so far from final. So is life itself, throughout nature, — repetitory, aspiring, unending. There is only one condition inevitable for its existence, a spark of the force which irradiates and animates the visible universe.

This may glow in a fly or in a blade of grass, in a human being or a nation or a race. Everywhere on earth it is environed with enemies sure at last to quench the potency of its fire. None the less its traces shall live. And when these linger in such forms as have stirred us to this reverie, we can never fail to recognize, even though we may not penetrate, their wondrous quality. There are ruined buildings as vital as the sea-shells from which their denizens withered away long ago, to leave us enduring record of beauty. Other ruins seem more like broken fragments of such carving as attempts throughout time to mimic the primal mastery of nature. There is life in both — each in its kind; but the truest life, the life most near to the core of that life which embraces us all, is recorded only in such fervors as animated the centuries of church building throughout France. No people, no race or fusion of races, could have left us works like these, unless — amid all the smothering and disturbing earthiness of its environment — it had been dominant with the power of religion.

But the days of church-building are long past, you may say, and forever. No doubt that form of expression is no longer living. We are fallen on other times, and our fathers were fallen there for generations before us. So they were; and

some of them on the times when the French Protestant Calvin — heretic or not, as you will — honestly set forth the system of theology which of all those opposed to ancestral Rome has proved most pregnant, most nearly enduring. You may lament his errors, denounce them with His Holiness himself. You cannot deny their religious vitality in times when the force of life had subsided from the bodily masonry of the churches. Calvinism lingers still, at the life-roots of our own far-off America. There was religion too, unrecognizable though its featured semblance may seem, in that chilled recoil from unreasoned dogma which throughout France preceded and precipitated the final convulsions of the eighteenth century. And the better you know the French, even to this day, the more surely you grow to feel that, in their inner hearts, they are wonderfully religious still.

A vivid memory of my childhood has never faded. During the last years of the Second Empire I was taken for the first time to Paris. The brilliancy of that vanished epoch may have been tinsel; but surely it gleamed in the full sunshine, — which same sunshine illuminated a world that looked bright and naughty. Even a boy of ten or twelve could feel imperial Paris alluringly earthy, could find the far from spiritual

airs of Offenbach fitly filling the atmosphere of his fancy as he was driven along the still gay boulevards. At the end of them stood the Madeleine, just as it stands to-day. One morning I was taken there, to hear the music of some religious ceremony. In the course of this, there was a procession of the clergy, perhaps to or from the sacristy. I remember of it only the marvellous impression made on me by the face of a priest who seemed the chief personage. To me the rest had been mere pageantry; this grave, gentle countenance was like that of a saint, of a being from some better world than I had ever quite dreamed of. We were in a crowded church, of course. A lady near us overheard some words of mine, as this unforgotten figure passed us. She turned, and spoke very kindly in English. She was glad, she said, that we had seen him; she knew him; he was as beautiful in spirit as he was in aspect. More still, that beauty of spirit was more truly French than the vanities which careless travellers might think the whole of France. Anyone can see our frivolity, she said, but no one can know us who does not know our piety.

It has taken me a good many years to feel the full truth of those words. In certain aspects I can guess it still only from hearsay. The circumstances of my official visit to France were

unfavorable to intercourse with the French clergy. During all the months of my university service the policy of the government was so actively antagonistic to the Church that anything radical was an object of more than usual clerical suspicion; and my lectures, in English and concerning America, were a radical departure even from university tradition. There were a few priests, here and there, among my hearers; and I came pleasantly to know a very few. In general, however, they were the sort of Frenchmen whom I saw least, — those who seemed least disposed to recognize my presence, unless politeness required them to do so.

And yet, as the months passed, I grew more and more to feel that, as much as any clergy who have ever sanctified the world, the clergy of modern France deserve their title of Reverend. The type of them is not such as we imagine from old memoirs and from Protestant traditions. There have been Richelieus and Mazarins, no doubt, Rohans and Talleyrands, and perfumed abbés. But, more and more, as I try to embody my conception of a French ecclesiastic in some visible form, I find the image widely different from these. It takes the shape rather of the devoted minister who stood disguised in the public streets when the kinswomen of Lafayette were on their

way to the scaffold, and made to them from amid the Revolutionary rabble the mystic sign of the last solemnity of the Church. It takes the shape of the simple Curé of Les Saintes Maries, leading us from his grim old fortified church on the Mediterranean sands to his own little study; and there, in his rusty black robe, showing us documents to prove his relics indisputable, from the very days of King René. To be sure, a gap of a few years had occurred, at the sad period of the Revolution, when a devout man was supposed to have kept them in reverent hiding. Except for this, there could be no question that they had been in their chests ever since the Provençal king found them concealed, five hundred years ago. And if they had not been the true relics of the saints whom an angel steered in a single night from the Holy Land to the delta of the Rhone, why should they ever have been concealed in the safe hiding-place where good King René discovered them, as his seal attests? And so on. The gypsies flock thither still, to pray at the shrine of black Saint Sara, the servant of the holy Maries. There is a painted offering, too, at the shrine, showing how, about 1590, a boy fell from the roof of the church, and remembering to confide himself to the Maries, came to earth uninjured and in a standing posture.

Nothing but miracle could have saved him, the priest opined. Such scattered evidence, incomplete though it were, he concluded, made it more reasonable to believe the pious tale than to doubt it. Just then and there, one could understand what he meant; could believe at least in his simple-hearted sincerity; could reverence the faithfulness of his ministrations; could fall to wondering whether his childish wisdom might not, after all, be deeper than the wisdom of what we fancy our maturities. He made the Abbé Constantin of Halévy seem no creature of fancy. Both alike, in their simple goodness, their unquestioning acceptance of vocation group themselves as lesser brothers of that saintly figure in the Madeleine, when Napoleon III still ruled his restive empire from the unruined palace of the Tuileries.

Just who this clergyman was, whose countenance has lingered in memory all my life, I cannot be sure. I believe, however, that he was the same Curé of the Madeleine who, a few years later, was shot in Paris by the order of the Commune, after some such form of trial as those idealistic regenerators of their country invented to dignify their summary proceedings. He was not alone in his martyrdom, you will remember. The Archbishop of Paris suffered at the same

time; and this was not the only archbishop done to death by Revolutionists during the nineteenth century. Another fell before the barricades which he had confronted, with full sense of his danger, in pursuance of his peace-compelling charge — descended to him apostolically from the very moment when the Holy Spirit inspired the first ministers of Our Lord. You shall find his relics, and more as well, treasured in the sacristy of Notre Dame. The splendors they show you at the same time — the robes and the jewels, even the sacred vessels admirable as works of art — seem tawdry things and trivial; but these plain records of how great officials of the Church gave up their lives must stir you deep. Share their faith or not, you cannot resist the impulse to believe that they have won their right to place in the noble army of Martyrs. And you execrate the wicked zealots who murdered them for their conscience' sake.

But then, if you be of our elder American tradition, and fall to pondering on the glories of martyrdom, there will come to you some whiff from the embers of Smithfield fires. You will find yourself thinking of Foxe, and of good John Rogers, burned in the presence of his wife and eleven young children, one at the breast. Rowland Taylor's memory will begin to kindle,

and Hooper's; Latimer's, too, and Ridley's, and Cranmer's — whose better voice still sounds in the deathless rhythm of the English Litany. They were martyrs, if ever martyrs were; and their martyrdom was wrought by the devotees of that very faith for which these French heroes, of another epoch, gave up life in turn. That faith, too, dragged the corpse of Coligny through the streets of Charles IX's Paris, drenched with the blood of Huguenots. It has been a wicked thing itself, that faith of theirs; so our fathers have taught us, from generation to generation. Were the Communists so utterly wicked, after all, for taking the shortest way to suppress the propagation of its damnable errors?

Thus, hardly knowing whither your mood is leading, you find yourself lost in the mazes of the old wars of religion. What these were in detail you have little conception, unless you be more learned in history than most of us. All you can feel sure of is that they were infinitely complicated wars — so snarled with politics, ecclesiastical and temporal, so intermingled with every base human passion and with every weak human frailty, that, again and again, there seems a case for those who should assert them religious only in accidental name. Tradition makes them seem conflicts of heavenly light with devil-

ish darkness — simple as sunrise. Study shows them murky — darkness clashing with darkness, into darkness darker still. Yet here and there gleams of light irradiate the darkness, until sometimes for a little while they seem to irradiate it everywhere. War is everywhere infernal, not least because the noblest of war lets loose the dogs of passion, to work havoc of the spirit, even where the spirit glowed awhile most potent. But supremely noble phases of the spirit stay immortal, strengthening as the years and the ages purify their disembodied glories. Such immortality is the crown of martyrdom. It is the crown, as well, of those who honestly sent the martyrs to their stakes, or did them to death with powder and ball in nineteenth-century Paris. The wars of religion were religious for both sides. It was their faith — for all their human weakness — which makes the memory of Huguenots and English Protestants heroic still. It was their other faith which makes us reverence the relics of the dead churchmen of Catholic France. It was a mode of faith, we can begin to feel at last, which led the Commune itself to what have seemed its acts of wanton wickedness. Negation of faith is itself faith. The wars of religion are upon us still, with all their horrors of the flesh and all their glories of the spirit. The true con-

flict is a conflict of religious ideals. They seem irreconcilable. The adherents of each believe it absolutely true; if so, their opponents must be absolutely in error. But this does not mean that they must know themselves to be so. Honest error is almost as venerable as truth itself. Both have the spiritual grace of utmost devotion.

In one form or another, such devotion pervades France — far more widely and more deeply than one might at first suspect. The intellectual candor of the French permits them to recognize human error with frankness. They do not pretend that men, of any shade, will probably conduct themselves like saints. But the fact that men err in no wise implies them godless. Inextricably good and evil, they are impelled to recognize the limits which environ humanity, and to find therein the force which must control us all. Thus comes faith, whether you will or no. The precision with which French minds work makes them apt to formulate their faith in pretty definite terms, and then to cherish the formulas. Thus, perhaps with excessive devotion to formula, the French come to range themselves, in the matter of religion, pretty clearly; and thus arise their tremendous religious difficulties.

To understand the question of religion, as it now exists in France, we may best conceive it,

I think, as a dispute between Catholics and dissenters from Catholicism. Among the French Catholic Christianity has a triple strength — that which is inherent in it everywhere, that which comes from prolonged national tradition, and that which results from the fact that, among the better sort of people, it has never ceased to be the fashion. For centuries, of course, there has been dissent in France; and two bodies of dissenters have a long and honorable history — the Protestants and the Jews. What is more, considering their numbers, each of these bodies is remarkable in quality. Members of each persuasion have described it to me as composed of the elect of the intellect — "*une élite de l'intelligence.*" In both cases the phrase is defensible. Jewish intelligence lies at the root of that pervasive prejudice now called anti-Semitic; your Jew can generally outwit your Christian; that is why your Christian, being thick-headed but strong of arm, has been disposed to keep him under forcibly. And French Protestants — like all Protestants — began by claiming right to think for themselves, in defiance of authority, and have maintained themselves throughout their checkered history by a pretty vigorous habit of reasoning, which has made them, as a class, unusually robust in mental process. Neither of these bodies, how-

ever, is considerable in numbers; both together would make a group of the elect hardly more numerous than the elect of Calvinism in comparison with its lost myriads of mankind. For our purposes, I think, they may fairly be grouped with the other opponents of Catholicism, who may more properly be termed free-thinkers. All agree in denying the authoritative right of the Catholic Church to control their religious belief and conduct.

All alike, as we have reminded ourselves, desire to exercise their various degrees of free thought in a country where the conception of Christianity as identical with Catholicism has never yet been deeply shaken. Here, I think, is one chief reason why Americans fail sympathetically to understand them. The native tradition of America still remains Protestant, at least to such degree that it does not readily grasp the principles of people who instinctively accept, as evident, the claims of ecclesiastical authority. These claims, too, are not easy to state, unless you happen to be among those authoritatively charged with the duty of stating them. So far as an outsider may venture to set them forth, in simple terms, they appear to be somewhat as follows.

The assertion of the Catholic Church, as I apprehend it, is that the full spiritual authority

requisite for salvation is resident, by divine commission, in itself. In the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi Christ uttered to Peter the prophetic words, *Tu es Petrus et in hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam.* And, when Christ was risen, the Holy Ghost descended. And Peter became the first Bishop of Rome. And he ordained priests and made other bishops, transmitting to them orders thus divinely holy. And such consecration, attending the transmission of holy orders throughout the centuries, has carried with it, and carries still, the sacred authority derived from the lips of Our Lord. To put this matter less solemnly, the Church believes that from the time of its origin it has possessed, in matters spiritual, powers which we may best understand by comparing them with the temporal powers recognized as inherent in duly established governments. These are quite independent of the persons who, from time to time, may be called on to administer them. It is to be presumed, no doubt, — and surely to be hoped at all times, — that sovereigns and soldiers, judges and policemen, will be respectable men, devoted to their duties. Whether they are or not, the authority of government and law remains unimpaired. If they can be proved unworthy, they can generally be removed from office by some duly recognized process. Until

so removed, they enjoy, in temporal matters, as much power as if their virtues were inestimable. The fact that a policeman is inflamed with drink does not prevent his right to arrest you; a bigamous collector of customs may still prevent you from smuggling. You may regret that a government is not better served; but so long as it persists, you are bound to admit its authority.

Something similar is the case with the Church, in matters spiritual. Protestant temper has been rather apt to dwell excessively on the fact that, at least from a Protestant point of view, the personal character of Catholic ecclesiastics has often left something to be desired. Historically, if we may trust records, this has been the case. What Protestant or free-thinking temper seems never to realize, is that this might have been the case ten times as often without in the least impairing the validity of the Church. As men, these ecclesiastics will be called to their final account as sternly as anybody else. From popes to deacons, they are no more safe than you or I. There was never an image of the Last Judgment but showed you shaven crowns among the damned. God will punish his undeserving officers as relentlessly as any earthly sovereign ever did. So long as they hold their office, however, they still represent divine authority.

Unwelcome though such authoritative claim may be to Protestant or free-thinking sentiment, it is comprehensible, and, what is more, sensible. The Church professes to be corporately possessed of spiritual powers which shall solve the spiritual problems of those who will acknowledge its claim; and no candid heretic can deny that, throughout the centuries of its persistence, it has proved to possess a wonderful spiritual efficacy. There is something far deeper than jest in the familiar old tale of the converted Jew. In his own country he was unshaken by the arguments of godly priests. But he went to Rome when things there were at their most godless; and he came back a Christian. It stood to reason, he concluded, that a religion which could maintain itself in spite of such vagrancies must be authentically divine. Conventionally, of course, this story is received as it was intended; it is thought a ribald jest. From the point of view of heretics, however, it becomes deeply instructive. Opponents of the Church, throughout its history, have denounced the human infirmities of its officers, every shade of whose misconduct they have emphasized and dragged to light. These same opponents have rarely stopped to consider what spiritual good the Church has wrought in spite of all its short-comings. This inspired corporation

professes to possess inalienably the divine power not only of guiding immortal souls towards eternity, but of so assuring them of salvation during the passing years of their embodiment in the flesh, that spiritual peace shall be almost attainable on earth. It has never for an instant denied or dissimulated the errancy of human beings; it has asserted only that none can wander so far as to stray beyond the pale of mercy and reconciliation. And if spiritual efficacy immeasurable be any argument in support of spiritual claim, the Church might rest its case content on the peace it has brought for ages to European humanity. It has not been the only source of spiritual comfort; but it has been incalculably the greatest, the most sure, the most comprehensive, the most general. Mere common sense would be at pains to deny its potency, in all matters of the spirit.

Mankind is something else than spiritual, however; something more or less besides. We have, the Church asserts, our immortal souls. Beyond question we have our mortal bodies, as well, distractingly entangled in the meshes of this world. The very Church itself has its human side, as the personal errors of its clergy would alone imply. This fact, indeed, may be held to make it most completely symbolic, showing by ex-

ample through the ages how divine truth can persist undimmed behind all the mists of human perversity. Its actual organization, its visible hierarchy, is as human as the Roman Empire ever was temporally. And although the true concern of the hierarchy is with the spirit, it has never long refrained from concerning itself also with matters of the flesh. Supreme in religion, it has been apt to deem itself supreme too in politics; and, on the whole, it has not conducted public business so happily as to command the reverence of dissent or even of many adherents to its doctrine who have disagreed with its policies. Heresy, baffled by the spiritual potency of the Church, may return refreshed to the charge, when it confines its attacks to what has happened, in general, when priests have undertaken to manage secular matters uncontrolled. One need not go to heretics for comments on this state of affairs. Not long ago, a good French Catholic professed in print that anyone must admit the Church supreme in matters concerning the immortal soul. At the same time, he pointed out, the principles which should direct the infinite course of an immortal organism should seem, in their very nature, hardly identical with those which should govern the brief course of anything mortal. This reasoning, he opined, went far to

explain why churchmen, as a class, are by no means satisfactory politicians or trustees.

At the same time there can be no doubt that the impulse of a spiritually supreme authority to assert its supremacy in other matters than those of doctrine or morals is humanly irresistible. It is subject to the same infirmity as an individual, growing aware of great power in some special faculty, and not sure of just where his power ends, — of where his inspiration ceases, we may say, and where his human weakness begins. To himself each of us, however complex, is a single being. If he can think well and speak well, for example, he feels as if he were consequently able to act wisely too. So he would be, except for the diabolical contradictoriness of the world. And we are all of us human enough to wonder why impeccable theoretical economists should not be put to the task of legislating for railways or of directing them — until, again and again, railways come to grief under their honestly blundering management.

To minds not deeply fond of system — to what we carelessly call practical common sense — such misfortune seems natural. To minds of more alert intelligence, and therefore desirous of reducing everything to order, it seems rather paradoxical; and paradox is unwelcome to in-

telligence. Though it cannot always be avoided, this temper holds, the less of it the better. Now the French, as we have reminded ourselves again and again, are extremely disposed to indulge themselves in the delights and the dangers of systematic reasoning. The intelligence of that distinction made by a French Catholic between the principles which should direct immortal organisms and those which should control organisms doomed to death is deeply French. The paradox of his reasoning is less so, unless you take it as a mere epigram. It is less so because it instantly sets up two divergent systems to control a situation where, on general principles, you might expect one to serve the purpose. The claim of the spiritually supreme Church to manage secular matters — perhaps we might rather say its impulse to meddle with them — is certainly defensible on general principles. A good man ought to be more trustworthy than a bad; more still, an inspired hierarchy ought to manage politics or education better than every-day men or women should pretend to. Whether they do so or not is hardly the question; we stray for the moment into regions of abstraction, where systems can flash themselves out of the nebulous confusion of unreasoning perception. These regions are particu-

larly congenial to the French. For one Frenchman, clerical or revolutionary, who should willingly recognize a distinction between the spiritual and the temporal activity of the Church, you shall find a hundred who incline to agree that the pretensions of the Church towards earthly omnipotence are reasonable. Your good Catholic is accordingly disposed to admit them, at least in principle; your Revolutionist, on the other hand, denying the right of the Church to intermeddle with secular affairs, is disposed not to split hairs, but to denounce the Church as infamous throughout. Among the French the unity of the authoritative Church appeals almost equally to its disciples and to its enemies.

To each other these groups appear much as they appeared throughout the elder period, when wars of religion worried Europe everywhere. As was the case then, any actual dispute grows so complicated with other matters and with other passions than religious, that at any given moment it may seem only another new broil of ignoble human effort. At the heart of every truly religious conflict, the while, you may always find an earnestness of conviction which shall ennoble its memory. For on each side you shall always find leaders — and followers too — unhesitatingly devoted to their ideals of truth.

In the case of the religious dissensions which have rent France during the past century or so, this is particularly evident on both sides: both have been heroically sincere in their loyalty to their philosophies. And neglecting for the moment all ecclesiastical pretension, we may recognize a fundamental difference between the philosophy of the Church and that of the Revolution. The two schools start from precisely opposite assumptions concerning human nature.

Both admit that if you scrutinize man, as he reveals himself on earth, you will find him everywhere to embody intermingled good and evil. From this point the reasoning of historical Christianity has steadily maintained that the evil forces of human nature are obviously the dominant ones. Men are naturally wicked. Wherever you look, in society or in history, you shall find them so. No scheme of earthly holiness was ever devised which could down the Devil. If anywhere you fancy yourself worthy of anything but spiritual contempt, search your heart, and tell yourself the truth of what you find there. We are all sinners, unless some power beyond ourselves intervenes to purify us. Like naughty children or strayed sheep, we can be guided toward good only by some higher power. To control evil, there is need of

authority. Throughout history this conception of human nature and its deserts has commended itself to myriads of honest and devout human beings.

The view of human nature asserted by the philosophy which found political expression in the French Revolution, though equally dogmatic, is less sinister. Why assume that the worse element in human nature is fatally dominant? It is always intermingled with good. There was never a state of society so corrupt that by seeking you should not find within it traces of virtue; there was never a man so abandoned that if he would search his heart he should not discover there something to help and even to impel him toward improvement. Amid the distorting systems which have confused and distracted the course of human history, no doubt, human nature has seemed evil to eyes not keen enough to search its secrets deep. That amid all this tragedy the impulse toward good has persisted unquenched proves that the fire glowing within us is truly divine. All we need for excellence, or at least for an aspiration which shall forever bring us nearer and nearer to excellence, is to perceive that the source of evil lies not in human nature, but in impediments to the free course of mankind. Seek the truth, and the truth shall make

you free. Once free, you shall never cease to grow better and more beneficent. Diabolically heretical though any such philosophy must sound to orthodox ecclesiastical Christians, there can be no question that it has seemed self-evident to myriads of human beings as honest and as devout as they themselves.

This deep divergence of philosophy has been exceptionally marked among the French, for the very reason that they are at once deeply religious and impulsively disposed to reduce to philosophic system whatever comes within the range of their knowledge. Starting from what he deems absolute truth concerning human nature, one kind of Frenchman, accepting the doctrine of the Church, proceeds to construct a system of which the merely logical conclusion, unattainable in perfection, would be the obedience of all mankind to ecclesiastical authority — contented acceptance of beneficent tyranny, not needfully unprogressive, but always reverently prudent. Starting from the opposite conception of absolute truth concerning human nature, another kind of Frenchman, rejecting orthodox doctrine, proceeds with equal logic to construct an equally unattainable system, of which the end should be a heavenly sort of anarchy — freedom from all control, made feasible by the strengthen-

ing harmonies of unimpeded individual aspiration towards ever higher excellence. Each of these systems rests on a dogmatic denial that there is any truth in the fundamental assumption of the other. Any toleration, any shade of compromise, would seem to both a crime of the spirit. In temper they are passionately at one; — whence their conscientious discord.

At the time of the Revolution this conflict was more simply evident than at any other epoch. For centuries the power of the Church in France had been great; and incidentally this had brought to the Church great wealth, particularly in lands. It was not only that church buildings and religious houses everywhere existed in what seemed needless profusion, keeping apart from lay use innumerable sites which laymen coveted. A considerable portion of the soil was in clerical hands. The clergy, as well, enjoyed many feudal rights. Quite apart from their religious character, they were among the most obnoxious of the privileged classes in the eyes of social reformers who ardently believed that men could improve only under conditions of liberty. Revolutionary sentiment made no very clear distinction between the spiritual character of the clergy and the civil. Obviously, if revolutionary principle were to prevail, the temporal privileges of

the Church must be suppressed. The simplest way to do this was to suppress the Church altogether, confiscating its property for the benefit of the nation and mankind. Without entering into any details of this confused history, we may agree, I think, that something like such suppression and confiscation occurred. In tradition, it seems a relentless persecution. Plain traces of it remain in France to this day. If one would know what lands used to be in clerical possession one must search records; but desecrated churches and ecclesiastical buildings you may still find everywhere — some abandoned or falling into ruin, others in crumbling use for secular purpose. I remember the singular picturesqueness of an old city church in Normandy, full years ago of stray storage, and now, I believe, destroyed. I remember a busy town market near Paris, held in a whitewashed nave — poultry cackling under the Gothic arches, the haggling of peasants echoing from the vaulted roofs designed to reverberate with the mystic words of the Mass. I remember the empty dustiness of a great Provençal monastery, with an afternoon sun streaming through the vacant windows of a Romanesque clerestory, and lighting the depths of broken tombs, ransacked by some revolutionary mob in that fierce old time when they would have

no more of the religion of Christ, and were all aglow for the worship of Reason.

Perhaps the most impressive monument of this devastation, the while, is probably the most familiar. During the eighteenth century, when French architecture was least religious in its sentiment, they set to building a fine new church for Saint Geneviève, the patron of Paris. Every line of it, every detail, belongs to the period of its erection. No structure, you would say, could less suffer from technical desecration; for nothing in it, from dome to foundation stone, would stir you elsewhere to meditation on the Christian ages. What is more, they did not rudely desecrate it. Its general aspect appealed to revolutionary taste; and besides it stood for what had been the most popular shrine of Paris. Why not keep it so still? One need only dedicate it to truer gods; and its beauty might persist for centuries, to show enfranchised humanity what reasonable buildings ought to look like. So presently, I believe after various debate, they devoted it "*Aux Grands Hommes de la Patrie,*" —To the Great Men of our Country,—and they called it the Pantheon, inasmuch as great men were the highest embodiments of their divinity. And sundry men whom we may freely acknowledge to be great were buried in the vaults of it;

and, of late years, the walls of the Pantheon have been covered with paintings as good as the most skilful artists in the world can make them. And whoever travels to Paris goes thither to look at the paintings and to ponder on the greatness of France.

If they had built the Pantheon for the purpose to which it is now devoted, they would hardly have made it much other than it is. What is more, when you stand in its colossal nave, you cannot deny that it has been honestly devoted to its purpose. Yet of all such edifices anywhere it stirs you least towards such emotion as they expect you to experience. You recall the dim sanctity of Westminster Abbey, or the spacious dignity of Santa Croce where the great men of other nations lie. You recall the equally pagan splendors of Saint Peter's at Rome, or of Saint Paul's with its begrimed dome surmounting the city of London. In each and all of these you have found something no longer here. Each in its own way has moved you as you might have been moved more tenderly by the human pathos of some country church in England, lying quiet behind its dark yew, where you may find a gaunt cross-legged crusader on his brass, and painted Elizabethan effigies with their marble ruffs, and pompous epitaphs from the time of King George

the Second, almost resounding from the dusty tablets above the pews. Each and all of these could open for you immeasurable vistas of the past, until you became marvellingly aware of the unfathomable identity, the unfailing brotherhood, of humanity. Strangely different in outward semblance, all were still animated by enduring life. Here in the Pantheon of Paris you seek it in vain. They have enriched it with fine art more intelligent than you shall find, perhaps, in all the rest together. But in some indefinable way it is strangely, appallingly lifeless, like the mummied sovereigns of old Egypt in their reopened coffins. You are in a temple from whence the spirit has fled. You are in the heart of emptiness.

Though such impressions may seem merely individual, this one recurs, not only when you yourself revisit this austere vacancy, but again and again when you ask your friends what they discover there. It implies at once the effort of the revolutionary French to uproot the religion of a thousand years and the hopeless futility of their instant religious aspiration. The change which the Reformation worked in the surviving churches of England or of Holland was far less radical than the change which the Revolution attempted in those of France; in the steady light of history it looks hardly more than

schismatic. Yet centuries had to pass before you could feel the tradition of Protestantism securely enshrined in the holy places of our elder ancestral faith. You may persecute religion as relentlessly as you will. Unless, without your persecution, it be moribund, you cannot suppress the spirit of truth burning at the heart of it. You may drive it from its sanctuaries; but if it be not dying of itself, you can never make them seem complete without it.

Among unending complications, I have grown to feel, some recognition of this truth was what brought about the re-establishment of the Church in France. Christianity could not be suppressed by any edict or legislation, any more than it could be imposed. Neither could any other form of vitally formulated religion. Religious bodies demanded such freedom as the philosophy of the Revolution pretended to accord to all created beings. Under compulsion, they surrendered most of their old earthly privileges; but they insisted on their human rights; and by and by they had them.

The religious constitution of France under the system inaugurated by Napoleon, which persisted until a little while ago, seems in its broader lines a pretty simple compromise. Three phases of religion were officially recognized as consider-

able enough to demand support — the Catholic Church, Protestant Christianity, and Judaism. So far as any of the three had possessed property before the Revolution, this had been confiscated by the revolutionary authorities. The government was in full possession not only of the churches and the lands, but of the revenues of the religious bodies which had flourished before the Revolution. For many reasons it was impracticable, as well as impolitic, to restore these; but it was both practicable and politic to make some manner of compensation for them, or at least for the embarrassments involved in the loss of them. The final arrangement was virtually as follows: The government assumed the charge of paying the salaries of the clergy, Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic alike. It restored to religious bodies the right of acquiring and managing private property. It granted to them the free use of such church buildings as they needed for their ceremonies. But, at least in the case of bishops, it reserved for itself a power of nomination analogous to that enjoyed in England by owners of church livings. In its main outlines the arrangement was simple and systematic; it involved, however, the paradox that the highest offices of the spiritually supreme Catholic Church could be attained in France only through the

mediation of a government which a turn of politics might place at any moment — as indeed it frequently did — in the hands of free-thinkers.

Under this system religion in France persisted for rather more than a hundred years. As we have seen, the Protestants and the Jews there were numerically inconsiderable. For our purposes, accordingly, these bodies may be neglected. The important consideration is what happened to the Catholic Church in its new relation with the state. On the whole, it prospered. As has been the case all over the world during the nineteenth century, to be sure, the decline of ecclesiastical privilege made a clerical career less attractive than of old to what had formerly been the privileged classes. The great development of science, meanwhile, which promised for a while to unriddle the universe, distracted from a clerical career a considerable amount of such intelligence as would earlier have found it congenial. But this was not peculiar to France. As a good Catholic gentleman, lately returned from Rome, observed to me with a sigh, "*Les cardinaux grands-seigneurs sont tous morts*"; and the excellent man who now sits in the chair of Saint Peter was born a peasant — a combination of circumstances unprecedented, I believe, since before the Reformation. The fact that the French clergy

of the nineteenth century have generally been simple people, moreover, involves the fact that they have generally been men of simple character, honestly devoted to their spiritual duties; and as they have remained French, they have generally been men of higher intelligence than their own compatriots always quite perceive.

This in itself would have won them, among Catholics, a higher degree of respect than was always commanded, in more prosperous times, by their more worldly predecessors. Together with this they enjoyed a kind of worldly advantage which no legislative opposition could much affect. Everywhere throughout all France, their position was strengthened by the subtle force of fashion. In America, even to the present time, the Catholic Church usually presents itself as, on the whole, foreign; and, except for a few notable instances in the fashionable life of our larger cities, it seems to old-fashioned Americans the religion of the masses as distinguished from the classes. Almost everywhere in America, the while, some particular form of Protestantism is sanctioned by local fashion; when self-made men do well in the world, nothing is more frequent than to find their children, as a matter of taste, associating themselves with more distinguished religious bodies than taught them their cate-

chisms. The very fact that this tendency is open to spiritual criticism defines the strength of it. Even though you may not be much attached to the tenets of your minister, you do not quite like, as a matter of decency, to be married or buried without his intervention; and you generally prefer the intervention of the most dignified divine accessible. What is thus familiar among ourselves, mostly in connection with various sects of Protestantism, has been the case with the Catholic Church in France. Not to conform to it has put a Frenchman in much the position of Dissenters in England. Their conscientious disregard of everything but conviction is highly respectable; but as a matter of fashion it is not quite the thing.

In France, meanwhile, the Catholic Church is truly catholic, in the sense that it embraces all classes of society. What I have in mind was vividly brought to my notice during my visit to one of the provincial universities. The city where this is situated, I had been given to understand, is rather disposed to freedom of thought in matters religious. This was not apparent to the eye; you would have supposed it a citadel of orthodoxy. During the ten days I passed there a great number of children were taking their first communion. Wherever you went in

the streets you were sure to meet little girls, gentle and simple, dressed in white and decorated with what looked like bridal veils, either on their way to or from church, or later in the process of presenting themselves, in their pretty finery, to the principal friends of their families. Boys, in similar circumstances, wore their best clothes, and white hat-ribbons, and big white rosettes on the breasts of their jackets. Not to have taken part in these ceremonies would evidently have made a child unwelcomely conspicuous — as queer costume might at an American school, or insistence on public use of Quaker dialect. So I was not surprised to find that, in a great many cases, the parents of these devout little people were by no means clerical in sympathy. A good Catholic colleague at this university gave me a humorous account of a free-thinking friend of ours, lately affected to sentimental effusion of parental tears by the pretty spectacle of his eldest daughter in her communion-veil; and he spoke with unfeigned admiration of the only professor in the university who, being himself a free-thinker, had resolutely refused to have his children baptized.

With this conscientious radical as well, I had a good deal of talk. There was never a more honest man, nor, in the general sense of the word, a more deeply religious. He recoiled, with spirit-

ual candor, from the thought of pretending by any formal act to acknowledge the authority of a religion which he believed false. Such an act seemed to him too solemn to be influenced, like dress or manners, by any accident of fashion. Sincerely believing that Catholicism was false, he made no secret of his hostility to it. This he found warranted not only by such facts as we have already touched on, threatening enough in themselves. He was deeply alarmed by two other phases of its growth. One was the progress it had made among the *bourgeoisie*. In former times, he believed, the Church had taken firm hold on the masses, and had evidently been the traditional supporter of the privileged classes. The great middle class meanwhile had been the stronghold of robust free thought. Now, as a matter of fashion, the *bourgeoisie* was becoming orthodox. It was sending its children to be educated in convents or by Jesuits. If this went on, he cried, what was to become of the Revolution? A reactionary *bourgeoisie*, which, alas! appeared to be declaring itself, would mean national reversion to the darkness of the mediæval past.

Again, what impressed him still more, was the growing wealth of the Church. The Revolution had taken half France, you might say, out of

mortmain. The gifts of the faithful were rapidly getting it back there. Your priests might be good men, according to their lights; — he would be the last to deny them the justice of this acknowledgment. But everybody knew that these very lights led them — as they had led them through the ages — to the practice of suggesting to penitents and to the dying that gifts to the Church had always been regarded as a measure of prudence. And, good as some priests might be, everybody knew that plenty of them were by no means respectable; at best they were untrustworthy, intriguing. They wormed their way everywhere; unopposed, they would riddle the body of society, or at least of the Republic. The melancholy necessity was evident. As a matter of the most elementary care for national safety, they must be pursued like what they were, spiritual vermin.

This summary, I believe, in no wise overstates the good man's opinion. What is more, not a few enlightened Catholics recognized in more measured terms that his opinions were not quite groundless. I have already mentioned the orthodox Catholic professor who found food for reflection in the religious history of Spain. I have mentioned as well how a sincere Catholic writer maintained that the priests whose profes-

sional concerns are with another world than ours, may best leave the affairs of this world to mortal experts. These good Catholics, the while, and thousands like them, would tell you most assuredly, that, whatever indiscretions the Church may have been tempted to commit, the opponents of the Church could match them at every turn.

Take, for example, the intrigues attributed to the Jesuits; everybody has heard enough of them to know what free-thinkers suppose Jesuits to be. Assume, if you like, without troubling yourself to examine details, that the charges against this eminent religious order rest on some basis of truth. The worst of them is not a bit worse than what French free-thinkers themselves were proved to have done, a little while ago. At the time the government was strongly anti-clerical. A considerable number of officers in the army were suspected of clerical sympathies. The government was consequently disposed to look at them with suspicion, and even privately to doubt their loyalty. The preservation of the Republic might at any moment require that the army should be in the hands of trustworthy men. It was accordingly of the highest importance to discover who the untrustworthy might be. One means taken for so doing was to hunt up any indication that a military man was on person-

ally friendly terms with orthodox Catholics. As agents in this investigation, the authorities turned to a Masonic fraternity. The French Freemasons, it is believed, are strongly anti-Catholic; and they are said to concern themselves with politics to a degree which the Freemasons of other countries deplore. At all events, certain Masonic brethren sent secret reports to Paris — to the effect that General A had gone to Mass, that Major B had been present when his niece took her first communion, that Captain C had spoken with personal respect of His Holiness the Pope, that Lieutenant D had taken a walk with a village priest. This information was presumably intended for the *dossiers* of the military men in question, whose billets would probably keep them in consequence a good way from Paris, unless the government turned clerical. By some accident they fell into the hands of clerical sympathizers and thus got into the newspapers. And I am bound to say that my free-thinking friend could find no better defence for them than that they proved the danger of the Church by demonstrating how the best opponents of Catholicism could hardly escape the contagion of clerical methods. For his own part, he condemned the intrigue, on general principles, with the best Catholic of them all.

The precise religious question then in debate was whether the Concordat — the instrument of compromise by which the ecclesiastical confusion of the Revolution had been adjusted with Rome — should be brought to an end. As everyone knows, this has since been done; and the subsequent state of religious feeling and politics in France has been disturbed. Into any details of the actual situation I do not feel competent to go. One thing, however, seems sure: the conduct of the free-thinkers now in power has amounted to what, in historical tradition, has been called persecution. It has not proceeded, of course, to the superannuated methods of former times; it has not killed anybody. But it has virtually confiscated a great deal of property; it has done what it could to prevent the accumulation of more; and, although demanding for itself complete freedom of conscience, it has practically legislated against freedom of conscience on the part of the orthodox. No clerical intolerance was ever more sincere or more unrelenting than the anti-clerical intolerance of these very times.

This was deeply impressed on me by a long and intimate talk with a liberal French Protestant — in New England he would have been a sincere Unitarian, with all the individual purity of char-

acter and generosity of human sympathy which that term implies. He condemned, as indignantly as any Catholic, the intriguing efforts of the Freemasons to thwart the careers of Catholic soldiers. And he told a vivid story of what he himself felt to be the blind prejudice of the older Protestants in France. For his own part, he saw no reason why one should not take innocent pleasure or seek spiritual edification anywhere. So he had often attended Catholic ceremonies, deeply sensitive to their emotional power and beauty. On one occasion, when exceptional music was promised, he had persuaded a good old Protestant lady to go with him. He had expected her to be delighted with the spectacle. Instead, it filled her with horror. The incense affected her like the smoke of Hell itself. The consecration of the Host seemed to her the incarnation of the Devil. She felt as a Catholic might feel in the presence of some fabled Messe Noire. She could hardly totter out into the air of heaven from this place which seemed to her accursed.

Her state of mind impressed my friend just as it would impress any of us — as dramatic, as pathetic, and yet as tinged with a touch of humor, to lighten the drama and the pathos. It was as unreasoningly intolerant as the mood of any

good Catholic might have been who should have discerned in the good woman's experience visible evidence of how the Devil must writhe in the presence of immortal Truth. For his own part, my Protestant friend seemed to feel more than content that Catholic ceremonies should go on as long as anyone cared for them. Beyond cavil, they were beautiful pageants, incredibly adapted by the experiments of a thousand years to the æsthetic sensibilities of human beings. They were even of spiritual efficacy, now and again, like some absorbing music. It was wiser to thank God for them than to find fault. If Catholicism stopped there, he for one would be glad to have it persist forever. But — his eye began to flash — there was a truly devilish side to these Catholics. No one could conceive what deliberate mischief they would wreak, if you let them have their way.

Just what did he mean? I asked. He answered by a supposed example, whether real or imaginary I do not know. Imagine a freethinker whose wife is a Catholic. The husband has of course consented that his children shall have orthodox religious education. His eldest daughter is a dear child, very fond of him. The time comes for her to prepare for her first communion. Instead of approaching it, as both

father and mother had expected, with exalted enthusiasm, she is observed to look ill. They grow anxious. A little inquiry reveals the abominable truth. Her spiritual adviser has taught her that the Church is the only sure means of salvation, and that unbelievers shall be lost. She knows her father to be an unbeliever. Is it possible, she has asked, that so good and gentle a man is in spiritual danger? And instead of evading the question, the priest has answered that, alas, he is. The opportunity of salvation can be declined only at the gravest peril; there is such a thing, no doubt, as invincible ignorance, but one cannot prudently rely on so slender a chance. It is to be hoped that her dear father may be brought to see the truth; if not, she can never feel assured of his companionship in a better world than this. Thus, exclaimed my friend, these Catholics sow dissension and unhappiness in any family which you suffer them to invade.

But how could an honest priest answer otherwise? I asked; if he believes this to be true, he would be false to his God by disguising it for an instant. That was not the question, my friend felt. To sow discord in happy homes is the most devilish thing that human perversity can do; and that is what you may expect from all your priests.

In other words, this most conscientious of liberal Christians proved unable to tolerate, in a fellow being, any degree of orthodoxy which should not admit a scheme of salvation as universal as his own. For that matter, I am not sure that he admitted the need of salvation for anybody. Like good Yankee Unitarians, he seemed to be of opinion that any of us, if he choose, may save himself; that no one knows what will become of us, but that, if we do our best according to our lights, we may go to sleep without fear. That a Protestant, warned that Protestantism is the road to Hell,— a friend in France quoted me that phrase from a French village sermon, — remains a Protestant at his own risk, he held to be a monstrous proposition, as intolerable as that a Catholic, who has a chance of Protestant truth, should be in spiritual danger.

So far as I could see, his state of mind was precisely the counterpart of what he condemned. He thought himself tolerant; and the same view of themselves was taken by many sound French Catholics of my acquaintance. Neither the one party nor the other, however, seemed able to understand the true secret of toleration, — an efficacious faith that, if everybody is free to state and to follow what he believes to be spiritual truth, the truth may be trusted to prevail. One

can perceive with deep sympathy why they all feel so. They are of a race which loves system, which believes in logic, which respects authority. They are carried away by the very virtue which is most surely theirs. The orthodox overrate the potency of authority, and heretics overestimate its dangers. Toleration — true liberty — is not yet a part of the honest faith of either.

To correct this error — if error it be — there is no means but to study the facts of spiritual history. No one can be sure of reading them aright. But there seems more than reason to find in them a lesson which should reduce our philosophic and religious certainties to humility. In brief, however impregnable our systematic conclusions may seem to us, however surely they may seem to involve our duty to control, as best we may, the errors of our fellowmen, one fact remains persistently true to human experience. So far as religious authority has attempted to exert itself over matters other than spiritual, it has come to grief. So far as temporal authority has meddled with spiritual matters, beyond the scope of earthly politics, it has come to grief as well. Spiritual authority has doubtless had the full justification of logic and system; and so has temporal. Each, we may freely admit, has been devotedly honest. Each has failed. We know

not what may be the course of things in Heaven. The lesson of human experience must teach us that, for all the protests of systematic reason, the wisest course on earth is the course of toleration and of mutual forbearance.

As yet there is little sign that the French are willing to learn this lesson. Until they do, the question of religion in France must remain one of action and reaction — of recurrent intolerance, as one side or another chances for a while to possess national power. On both sides there will long be what we may find on both today — noble impulse, devoted consecration to duty, and passionate misunderstanding of the other. If the free-thinkers had their way now, there would be some such persecution of the Catholics as the Catholics inflicted on the Protestants when they revoked the Edict of Nantes. Let the Catholics come back into power, as they pretty surely will, and the story would be retold again in its elder terms. And so to the end — unless, by and by, the wonderful intelligence of France awaken to the true wisdom of a toleration as yet beyond its grasp. They believe that they believe in freedom. They cannot seem to understand that freedom in the affairs of the spirit means that we must render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things which are God's.

VII

THE REVOLUTION AND ITS EFFECTS

OUR consideration of religion in France has inevitably touched on the most salient fact of modern French history — the Revolution. The immediate social and political results of this catastrophe have probably been much less radical than is generally supposed; but memory of it and the tradition recur everywhere. Everywhere, too, this memory and these traditions remain so vital that few can regard them dispassionately. They still excite either enthusiasm or resentment, they are still viewed with honest and intense partisan spirit. The better you know France, the more clearly you see that, as yet, no study of the Revolution has seemed fair to any Frenchman who has not been disposed to accept its conclusions beforehand.

This was brought concretely to my notice during a hasty visit to France a few years ago. The admirers of Taine had proposed to erect some monument in his memory. To me this plan

seemed obviously proper; for I had been disposed to think that of all the writers of nineteenth-century France none had been more admirable than Taine, both in conscience and in influence. The fact that I had not always been persuaded to accept his conclusions — particularly in the matter of English literature — in no wise impaired my respect for him. He seemed always precise, always intelligent, and above all incessantly suggestive. The vigor of his thought and the animation of his style compelled you to more alert thinking than you could have done without him. Even when this cogitation led to results widely different from his own, accordingly, you gratefully acknowledged him as the master whose stimulating power had most truly helped you. There was never monument projected, I fancied, for which more general approval might have been assured. Yet, to my surprise, the plan aroused bitter opposition.

At that time I had already the pleasure of knowing the sincere French free-thinker concerning whose religious opinions I have had something to say. When I ventured to express to him my wonder why anyone in France should hesitate to pay honor to the memory of Taine, I found that I had waked the wrong passenger. The disciples of Taine are accustomed to believe

that his work in French history pricked the bubble of revolutionary legend. To my radical friend Taine seemed rather to have blasphemed the spirit of the Revolution. Publicly to honor his memory would therefore be to range yourself against the Rights of Man. So to range yourself would be to undo the work of a century of humanitarian effort — nothing less than to disgrace France. It was as if I had suggested to an old-time Boston Abolitionist that some national Walhalla at Washington would be incomplete without the figure of General Lee.

Neither on this occasion nor on any other could I enter intelligently into the confused details of revolutionary history. To do so would require the work of years, doomed to results which many would still hold partisan. On the other hand, convinced of the sincerity both of Taine and of my friend, and convinced that they were equally devoted in their loyalty to the France which bred the one as truly as the other, I found this little talk full of suggestion as to how the Revolution affected French temperament. This temperamental aspect of it, and of the ensuing course of French history, is all I shall discuss. This, at least, — apart from historical fact, — has its place in our effort to understand the French of today.

On some chief features of their national temper we have touched already. Intellectually this temperament is remarkable for two contradictory phases — the more intolerantly opposed because of the exquisite precision with which the French intellect works in detail. The French are intensely fond of logical system — a fact evident in every aspect of their lives; and at the same time their passion for intellectual candor compels them to admit unwelcome fact far more readily than we do. Now, as we have clearly reminded ourselves, no system ever devised by human beings could generalize all fact. Every political and social rule must always have its exceptions. When these appear, logical minds are confronted with the question of what shall be done with them. The possible courses seem three: either the unwelcome fact must be suppressed; or it must be ignored — treated as negligible; or else you must alter your system. And which of these courses a Frenchman will take, in any given case, he himself would be at pains to predict. The only sure thing is that he can hardly help taking one of the three.

Emotionally, meanwhile, the national temper of France is not only impulsively generous; it is extremely sensitive to generalized, as distinguished from individual, appeals to human sym-

pathy. In every phase of life the social conscience, the social sensibility, the social enthusiasm of the French is more highly developed than any to which Americans or Englishmen are accustomed. Even in their private relations the French lay less stress on personal rectitude than on the performance of social duty. The paradox results that while they may sometimes seem callously indifferent to the hardships of individuals, — of divorced women, for example, — they are capable of such devotion to social ideals — like that of the *foyer* — as with us would demand, for full development of its exaltation, the stimulus of romantic personal passion. To understand with any true sympathy the temperamental history of the Revolution, we must keep this emotional trait in mind.

Confused, still confusing, as that political convulsion remains, certain general facts about it are growing fairly clear. The course of history had long tended to make the formal systems of both government and society inflexible. This had resulted in a remarkably obvious development of facts — political, religious, moral, social — undeniably incompatible with the systems. The temper of the eighteenth century — which in its higher phase was genuinely rational and philanthropic — compelled intellectual candor to admit

these facts without reserve. The precise question became, what should be done with them? On the whole, there was no great effort to suppress them, — a process unwelcome to the taste of a period sensitive to the delights of speculative reasoning. The tendencies were rather, on the one hand, to ignore them, with the graceful recognition of epigram, or on the other hand, if you took the matter more deeply to heart, to see what could be done towards altering your system to fit them. These tendencies were clearly irreconcilable. As they came to clash, they deeply stirred on both sides a kind of ideal emotion, best understood if we will conceive the spiritual conflict as one between men who believed traditional system in duty bound to ignore inconsistent fact and men who believed, on the contrary, that in view of such fact the interests of all humanity demanded a reconstruction of traditional system.

Generalizations like this require specific examples. I remember none more vivid than you may find to this day in a picturesque Burgundian château which escaped revolutionary pillage. It lies in the heart of the country, so that to get there you must drive a good way over unfrequented roads. It stands on a slope, overlooking the little village which its master used to

own. It is still surrounded by its gardens and its park; and, both inside and out, it is very little altered since the time when Louis XIV sent its owner, Bussy Rabutin, to pass a good many years there, in exile from court for misbehavior. Precisely to understand how this gentleman had misbehaved would carry one farther into the scandals and the intrigues of his time than I have ever had patience to go. Among other things he had written stories of which the acceptable lubricity had failed to atone for the fact that under transparent pseudonyms they set forth the frailties of his friends and his enemies with a precision beyond the range of discretion. The amusement he devised for his exile accordingly seems characteristic.

In general, this was to decorate the panelled walls of his rooms with portraits of everybody whom he conceived to deserve such honor. There is a gallery of the French kings, from Hugh Capet to Louis the Great; there is another consecrated to the great soldiers of history and of France, from Hector, and Alexander, and Cæsar, and Bertrand du Guesclin, and Bayard, to his bewigged and complacent self; and there are other manifestations of his taste in its innocent phases. The more remarkable aspect of his collection, however, is the coolness with which he

inscribed under the portraits of his contemporaries his opinions of their conduct and character. One of these comments runs somewhat as follows: "*Isabelle d'X., Marquise de * * * à laquelle personne ne pouvait refuser ni son cœur ni sa bourse, et qui faisait peu de chose de la bagatelle.*" And a whole room is devoted to emblematic designs, conceived and they say executed too by his own unaided ingenuity, all reiterating his displeasure with a lady, the wife of somebody else, who had not seen fit to carry her devotion to him so far as voluntarily to share his rural exile.

Now, whether these statements are as true as those in which he records what beauty was mistress of which king I did not trouble myself to inquire. The incontrovertible fact is that they were written, to solace his virtual imprisonment, by a great gentleman, whose windows, like his gardens and his park and his preserves, commanded a view of his little village, still clustering about its venerable church. Here generations of laborious peasants were succeeding one another with no chance of sharing his complicated privileges, and furthermore under the burden of increasing taxation, which they were beginning to believe devoted to the support of such virtues as they could hardly help knowing to be inscribed on the

walls of his panelled apartments. System and fact have rarely appeared in sharper contrast. The best defence for the system under which Bussy Rabutin and his friends enjoyed privilege was that they were really the betters of common folk. And here was one of themselves, devoting laborious years to the assertion that they were about as worthless as humanity can be. He may have done it on purpose. I have never taken the pains to find out whether he meant to make trouble, perhaps as a resentful reformer. The fact that he did what he did is enough for us; whatever his intention, he proclaimed system and fact to be menacingly at odds.

This was a full century before the Revolution. During the last days of the old *régime* the same sort of thing was even more salient. The two great personages of the French Church whose names are now most familiar were probably the Cardinal de Rohan and Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, — the one remembered as the hero of a famous intrigue in which he was led by impostors to believe his personal charms irresistible to the Queen; the other, pliantly disfrocked by the Revolution, popularly supposed to have developed into the most mendacious public man of his uncandid epoch. They had their merits, both of them; but these merits were hardly of

the kind on which a privileged clergy, in cure of the souls of a nation, could prudently rest its case in a debate between fact and system. At that time the Queen, not yet tested by martyrdom, was held light-headed even by her friends, and otherwise light by the cynical scandal of the many courtiers who hated her. Monsieur de Nolhac tells us that not one of the monstrous accusations brought against her by the revolutionary tribunal was invented by the public prosecutor or the rabble. You can find them all in court lampoons and songs, current at Versailles when they still fancied that system was strong enough to ignore fact forever, and never troubled themselves about what they might pretend to be fact, so long as it amused them. The crucial fact is that these songs and these lampoons existed, not whether there was a grain of truth in them. A royal prince of those times played Figaro in court theatricals, and the whole company was highly entertained.

The very mention of Figaro brings us to the other aspect of the situation. To go no farther, the popularity of Beaumarchais as a dramatist is in itself an extraordinary fact. No one else had pointed out with equal wit and precision the weakness of those who to enjoy the privileges of systematically established rank need only give

themselves the trouble to be born. That his comedies were not suppressed implies a freedom of speech and thought hardly equalled at any later period of French history. And this freedom of thought and speech was devoting itself, as a matter both of fashion and of conscience, to refreshing speculations concerning the Rights of Man. These rights, as we have seen, are based on an assumption about human nature inconsistent with authoritative privilege. The old system could be reasonably defended only so long as you maintained that men are naturally so depraved that, badly as they behave under restraint, they would behave worse if uncontrolled. If, on the other hand, men are not born in sin, it seems reasonable to suppose that they might probably behave better if left free to do so. So the temperamental conflict slowly defined itself. Everybody admitted that system and fact could not be reconciled. One side held that we should ignore fact, except so far as we can temper despotism by epigram; the other held, with increasing enthusiasm, that the time was come to readjust system. This more modern spirit did not intentionally demand anarchy; but it eagerly advocated a new system to supplant the old, recognizing the newly demonstrated truths that human nature is not sinful and that society need

not repress it, and embracing them with full logical consistency.

There can be little question, I think, that the high hopes of French revolutionists were both encouraged and confirmed by the course of American history after 1775. The story of Lafayette is the classical example of this influence. Himself of the privileged class, but an eager and disinterested partisan of the Rights of Man, he was in early youth an officer attached to some garrison in eastern France. Here, at table, he met an English prince, not minutely informed about the revolutionary disturbances in the American colonies, who led him to believe that these remote provinces had risen in arms to assert their right to establish society on the new model. The ardent young Frenchman's imagination was kindled. He did not rest until, after a voyage during which, in his own words, the Atlantic and himself affected each other with sentiments of mutual sadness, he had placed his services at the disposal of America. He fought for us bravely and well, winning for himself a place among our national heroes second in popular memory only to that of Washington; and to the very end of his life, some fifty years later, he was the Frenchman who knew and who loved us best.

Yet, all the while, he seems never to have understood — hardly to have suspected — the fundamental nature of the American Revolution and of the enduring government thereby brought into being. Our American forefathers used the terms of French philanthropic philosophy, just as we use them to this day and as our children will probably continue to use them so long as our republic exists. None of us have ever stopped to define them, even for ourselves; in all likelihood we never shall; to Lafayette and to America alike it always seemed that we spoke a common language of the mind and of the heart. So, in many emotional moods, we did. But, on the other hand, the liberty for which the American Revolution was fought had a character different from that of the liberty proclaimed by the revolutionary spirits of France. To them liberty meant, on the whole, a new philosophic system of government, resting in final analysis on dogmatic denial of the old Christian assertion that human nature is evil; it was therefore deeply subversive both of traditional beliefs and of the traditional constitution in the kingdom where they desired it to have sway. To us liberty meant the preservation of our own remote society and government from all foreign interference. During the one hundred and fifty years which

had elapsed since the foundation of colonies in Virginia and in New England, America had unwittingly developed something like a common law — an unwritten constitution, political and social — of its own; and this had been confirmed by ancestral experience, virtually immemorial. When, in any country, a political system has descended from a generation no longer on earth, it has just such sanction of tradition as would strengthen institutions a thousand years old. Anyone who has watched the life of American colleges can observe this truth in a fantastic little form, the more instructive for its very comicalities. At most, a student remains in college four years; with each four years, accordingly, the undergraduate population is completely changed. Let some legal innovation occur, or some new social custom arise. There will be a great bother for the moment; but with each new year there will come to college a body of men who have never known anything else there; in four years the change of population will be complete; in five, every one will assure you that this state of things — not yet six years old — has existed from before human memory, and that to meddle with it would be a daringly radical violation of sacred tradition. Wherefore shrewd governors of American colleges nip unwelcome novelties in the bud,

and graft welcome ones in their stead, assured that before long they will flourish with all the mysterious strength of immemorial sanction.

Their own independence, their own common law, — free from interference even on the part of sovereign England, — was what American Revolutionists really fought for. What they opposed was not exasperating or obsolete tyranny; it was reactionary innovation — the reassertion of a power so long disused that it had lost the support of tradition. Except for the suppression of the crown, the constitution of every state in America remained virtually unchanged. What is more, the substitution of republican government for the previous form, nominally monarchical, was not much of a change. It amounted to little more than extending to the chief executive office the same principle of popular election on which almost all other offices were already based by immemorial custom; and in more than one of the colonies even the governors had been elected by the people. Radical as the terms of our Revolution may have sounded, accordingly, and radical as the new forms of American government may have appeared, they were really conservative. What they actually maintained was not a new system of human rights and policy; it was the system which had grown strong among our-

selves in the regular course of nature. Herein lay our true vitality.

To Lafayette, the while, generously enthusiastic throughout his life, liberty seems always to have signified a philanthropic philosophical doctrine. The fact that he had himself seen it victorious in America, and able there to lay the foundations of enduring government, indicated that it could do so anywhere. That it could develop otherwise under other conditions. — where instead of maintaining established traditions and institutions, it must begin and persist by means of destruction and innovation — does not seem to have occurred to him. So far as one can now perceive, he was never able to understand why what worked so well in the American colonies should come to grief in his beloved France.

Something similar seems true of the remarkable impression made in France by the personality and the character of Franklin. During the celebration of his two-hundredth birthday I happened to hear the suggestive remark that he was an extraordinary example of how the environment of America, during the uncrowded years of his youth and his manhood, could affect the development of a man of genius whose native characteristics were not the rather ideal ones of American tradition, but the purely prac-

tical ones of the old English yeomanry. He was not, you will remember, sprung from the earlier emigration to New England. To the French of his later years, on the other hand, Franklin appeared to be not an Englishman, nor yet a man who had grown to his maturity among economic and social conditions impossible in any old and densely settled part of the world. He appeared rather to be a demonstration of what human nature in general might grow to be, if society and government were once established on the principles of the Revolution.

Though the sympathy of the French with revolutionary America was undoubtedly complicated with political animosity toward England, we may easily over-emphasize this aspect of the situation. There can be no reasonable question that it was sincerely generous as well, ardently philanthropic, and fired by such enthusiasm as is always characteristic of France when French emotion is stirred. There can be no reasonable question, either, that the revolutionary impulse of the French received great encouragement from the successful result of revolution in America. The speculative conclusions of philanthropic philosophy seemed thereby vindicated. The difference between a conservative revolution and a destructive, between one based on

rights already enjoyed and one demanding rights untested by experience, no one noticed.

When we thus conceive the Revolution in France, it looks simpler. Amid all the distractions of its details, we can feel honestly sure, whatever our sympathies, that a great part of its vital power lay in the genuine enthusiasm of its philanthropic impulse. Humanity was suffering needlessly. It was belied by the system which at once oppressed it, and defended the oppression by declaring human nature depraved. Franklin, and the course of America, showed the falsehood of this relic of mediæval delusion. Left to himself, man would grow good; left to their own collective wisdom, men would govern themselves better than priests or kings had ever governed them. Outworn system, benumbing tradition, must be cast aside. Superstition must yield to intelligence. Some new system, neglecting tradition and established in the full light of reason, must recognize the facts — philosophic, social, political — which elder time had stupidly or cynically ignored. Once set up this new system, logical, consistent, complete, comprehensive, philanthropic; and humanity, no longer belied, need no longer suffer. In its nobler phase, at least, — and even those who most deplore the Revolution must acknowledge that

it had a temperamentally noble phase, — this movement believed that it could inaugurate a new and a better dispensation for the whole human race. With equal candor even those who love it best must admit that, in the perspective of a century, it has revealed aspects which might give color to the contrary opinion that it was the first plunge of civilization into a still rising tide of barbarism.

There is no piece of literature in which the temper of its origin and its course is more vividly recorded than we may find them in the "Prelude" of Wordsworth. The passages which describe his first journey to France are aglow with the inspiration of those hopeful days. It was as if the whole nation had awakened from some nightmare to the cool sunrise of a happy morning; and the poet himself, full of dreams for the future of humanity, found this widespread rejoicing replete with philanthropic augury. What he says of it is vague, unsystematic, scattered; but the spirit of his poem sinks deep in memory, like the breath of flowers in some springtime atmosphere. The passages where he later sets down his grief at the subsequent course of the Revolution are longer and more poignant. That awakening of humanity swiftly revealed itself as only another dream, more evanescent

than the nightmares of the past. Philanthropy found itself inevitably confronted with the systems and the beliefs of a thousand years. It was kindled to consciously destructive fervor. What would not yield, and what would not suffer itself to be ignored, must be suppressed. The old system must give way to the new, which swiftly revealed itself the more tyrannical of the two. Meanwhile the old system proved sadly stubborn. The lopping of its branches in no wise uprooted it; rather the process served, like pruning, to strengthen the remaining fibres of its stock. People of the elder temper, the *émigrés*, the nobility in general, and whoever loved established tradition, insisted on trying to ignore the Revolution throughout. Indeed, they have hardly yet given up their hopeless effort. Philanthropy, enthusiasm, the Rights of Man, ran to murderous excess. The watchwords of the Revolution — Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity — remained full of generous sound and of inspiringly pure philosophic meaning; but the sentiments for which they came to stand curdled fast into fierce hatred of whoever opposed or questioned their arbitrary course. At least, this is the mood which possesses you as you read the disenchanted lines of the later books in Wordsworth's "Prelude."

Incomplete though this view of the situation be, it is at once simple and true to the relics of the period. Anyone who travels in modern France must everywhere perceive an amazing accumulation of tragic evidence that, in one tremendous aspect, the period of the Revolution was appalling. Philanthropy and philosophy attempted to ignore historic tradition as blindly as historic tradition had ever attempted to ignore other things than itself. They strove abruptly to end one period of historic life, to establish a complete and systematic new one; and this they attempted with uncompromising enthusiasm among the people which still remains, in private temper, the most frugally prudent, the most instinctively conservative of the modern world. They not only assailed political institutions and legal privileges, eager to clear such obstacles from their way; as we have already seen, they suppressed the religion of the country, turning into a crime, by legislative decree, what had previously been accepted as a duty. If some passionate reformers of today should send to jail, without notice, any couple whom they could prove to have been legally married, they would hardly disturb society more. We have touched already on the colossal emptiness of the Pantheon — the shrine from whence its God has

been cast out. You can find more instantly palpable evidences of revolutionary destruction everywhere — in the secularized churches, in the ruined houses of the country nobles, and in the strange names of the present possessors of castles and parks which chanced to escape destruction. Or go to the Municipal Museum of Paris, now installed in the Hôtel Carnavalet, which used to be the town house of Madame de Sévigné, and which happens to be remarkably well preserved. The contents are arrayed in chronological order, from prehistoric times to the present day. There are relics of Roman Paris, of the mediæval city, of the Paris of the Renaissance, and of the long persistence of the old *régime*, from Henry IV's time to that of Louis XVI. Then comes an abrupt change. The rooms devoted to the period of the Revolution seem full of objects from a different race, a different epoch. The older work, fallen into triviality though it finally were, preserves that exquisite something which we recognize as instinctive style. It seems a part of nature, — made as it is because for the moment everybody feels that things ought to be made so. In comparison the newer work seems crude, deliberate, intentional, impotent. It has rude vigor, it has plenty of misdirected energy; it incarnates, if you will, incalculable force. But

it has a certain blatant futility, as of youth pretending to the wisdom of maturity, or of rudeness declaring itself the better of manners, just because, in a free fight, it can strike more knock-down blows. It stands, beyond question, for power that must be recognized, that shall persist, that shall endure. But in itself this first manifestation of new power is more transitory than the things it asserts outworn.

A conspicuous monument at Lyons will illustrate what I mean. That city suffered more from the Revolution than any other in the country. At one time, I believe, they tried to raze it, and so nearly did so that you must search there long for anything to suggest that the ancient capital of the Cæsars was inhabited by human beings before the nineteenth century. Accordingly, it is with a sense of pleasant surprise that you recognize, in the equestrian statue which dominates the Place Bellecour, its chief public place, the royal figure of King Louis XIV. Here at last, you feel, is a genuine relic of the older time, spared the Lord knows why, to remind us that modernity does not comprise the whole scope of history. You approach it in this mood, until you are near enough to read the inscription on the pedestal. Then you discover why the Grand Monarch still keeps his

seat; for here are the words which explain his presence: "*Chef d'Œuvre de Lemot, Sculpteur Lyonnais*" — "The Masterpiece of Lemot, a Sculptor of Lyons." Not a syllable about whom it represents. It is left there just to show how skilfully a citizen of the town was once able to direct the casting of bronze in monumental form. It is a lasting monument to his glory. This shall endure, long after tyrants and tyranny shall be forgotten. Nobody seems to have foreseen that a stray traveller from across the seas would ever remember, in its presence, the magnificence of Louis the Great, and would be compelled, even after long contemplation of the masterpiece, to remind himself at home of the sculptor's name by hunting it up in his guide-book.

If there be one trait more salient than another in the mood which should thus strive to deny the past and to dictate the future, that trait is juvenility. As you ponder on the spirit of the Revolution, you come to feel in it not a few qualities best understood if you liken them to such as make you at once love children and find them exasperating. It had an almost inspired precision of superficial perception; it saw what was the matter, and it believed that it saw exactly what ought to be done. It was angelically generous in spirit — or at least it meant to be. It was

diabolically, callously cruel to any obstacle in the way of its righteous purposes. It had, to all appearances, no idea that such a thing as experience had ever proved dreams utopian, or had sadly assured us that we can build solid structures only on the foundations of the past. It seemed unaware, indeed, that structures of law and government, of conduct and morals, need any foundation at all. Why not build at once on the quicksands and the morasses which, in a state of nature, entangle our feet? One would be at pains to say whether such characteristics as these are more obvious in the winning futility of childhood, with its purities and its naughtiness, or in the devoted efforts of the French Revolution to change the course of national and of human history.

The attempt was sure to fail; yet that is not the whole story. Even unrealized ideals have a vitality of their own, sometimes the more potent when they are no longer shown to be futile by the inexorable test of persistence. As a matter of fact, the Revolution did much destructive work, particularly on the surface of this world. It strove, meanwhile, to construct. It fancied that its decrees would suffice to sweep old system away. It fancied that it had recognized and proclaimed the truths on which new system could be based,

Just what this new system should be, except that it should not be the old, it failed to agree. Power in the hands of the people, actual sovereignty wielded by a populace, means anarchy. To this end, of course, the Revolution never came. In the name of the people party after party, man after man, issued their decrees as autocratically as any sovereign of former days had ever done in his own. More than a little philanthropic purpose was accomplished, they say. Perhaps it was. But there was no possibility of establishing it by means of a new system based merely on philosophic dogmatism. Phantasmagoric the spectacle seems now, with its ever-changing figures, all surging somewhither in the vast ebullition of national and world spirit let loose about them. Volcanic, you may call it all, — geyser-like. It could not last, yet it could not be forgotten. Its destructiveness was a fact — enthusiastic effort can cast off what seem like adamantine chains. Its futility was a fact — only time can cool new chains into adamant. Its generosity was a fact — philanthropy can kindle almost divine enthusiasm. Its existence, however passing, was a fact — that you have not accomplished what you strive for can never undo the fact that you have made the effort. Reaction was sure to ensue. A people like the French, who love

system to the core, can never long pursue the road toward anarchy. Yet when reactionary system came upon them, it found not the old France, but a new one. In elder France there had been only one historically sanctioned tradition — the time-honored tradition of authority, in church and state alike. In the new France there was this second tradition of philanthropic revolutionary aspiration. Neither the one France nor the other could ever be all France again. The decrepitude of the older time and the juvenility of the new, each unable to control, must each be reckoned with in any durable system of the future. For each was a fact beyond controversial denial, just as it was a fact that the Revolution had violently overthrown the traditional monarchy, and that a new despotism came, with renewed vigor of now concentrated physical force, to repress the vagaries of the Revolution.

Thus the true problem before the France of the Empire was to devise and to maintain a system comprehending and reconciling the discordant traditions of the past,—the elder and the younger, the royalist and the revolutionary. In both there had been useless, mischievous features. Let them be flung away and forgotten. In both there had been elements of enduring strength, — still flushed with wholesome vitality. Let

these be brought together and combined into a strength such as neither could ever secure without the support of the other. There was something not to be gainsaid in the purposes of those who would base all system on order established by divine right; there was something not to be gainsaid, as well, in the purposes of those who would base all system on some other order neglecting divinity and recognizing only the rights of man. The reactionary system of the Empire was less transcendental than either, but at once more potent and of colossal good sense. For it based itself rather on the obviously earthy principle that society could be best served and best advanced by a system which should keep careers open to talent.

Like the Revolution, the career and the character of Napoleon are matters too vast and complicated for valid summary. As was the case with the Revolution, meanwhile, it is possible to simplify the aspect of him most potent in the moulding of modern France. The likeness of him to Cæsar is true, impressive, startling. Alone in the history of Europe, these two men successfully confronted political and civic chaos with the assurance of confident genius. In both this genius was not only military but administrative as well; in both it was, in the widest sense,

the incarnate genius of sovereignty. The imagination of posterity remembers both most vividly as victorious soldiers; and neither could have done his work without the basis of his military achievement to build on. Yet in the case of both what is truly enduring is the civic structure founded thereon. The genius of Cæsar gave to the world the term *empire*. He found the word *imperium* used to signify the power of a military commander; he left it signifying throughout the ages the power of a dominant sovereignty, personal or national, imposing the arts of peace upon mankind, merciful to the conquered, pitiless to rebellious spirits. And those immortal verses in which Anchises foretells the grandeur of Rome might have been written as truly of the imperial purposes of Napoleon.

His civic work has endured. Partly based on the strong survivals of elder system, partly aided by the usefully destructive work of the Revolution, partly devised with the infinite perspicacity of practical genius, it not only gave France a renewed system now deeply rooted in the core of French custom, but it altered the political and the material aspect of the whole European world. From the Code Napoléon to the broad roadways of Alpine passes, you shall find enduring traces of him everywhere, outlasting marble or bronze

as they have outlasted the echoes of his cannon. On the other hand, all the power of his unrivalled genius for government did not achieve the end of reuniting the dissentient traditions of France. Rather it created, to rival them, a third tradition, at one with neither of those which it attempted to reconcile, to comprehend, to fuse. The effort of the empire may be compared to that which psychic physicians make nowadays to flash into renewed harmony the fragments of some dissociated human personality. They are not beyond the range of hope; but there must always hover about them a confused element of bewildering chance, divine if it smile, diabolical if it frown. In the case of French nationality one can begin to see, mistily but not for that the less confidently, some reason why the colossal effort of Napoleon was doomed to failure. This nationality, disputative and quarrelsome within itself throughout the course of its recorded history, had split into two distinct phases, each animated by intense ideal devotion to a system completely at variance with that of the other. In common these phases had the virtue of appealing to the deepest and most admirable phases of human nature. Both were surrounded by all manner of cynical and ignoble moral perversities; you could never be sure of finding

either pure; but wherever either gleamed pure you would surely find it purified by trial into such inspiring idealism as gives you pause when you would hold human beings in contempt. The nobler spirit of disunited France was broken in two; on the one side it was devoted to the divinely sanctioned system of royalist tradition, on the other to the philosophically sanctioned system of revolutionary philanthropy. If any note could resolve these jarring chords into harmony, it must be a note spiritually as pure as either. And just this dominant tone of moral supremacy seems to have been fatally beyond the range of the Empire.

Its power, its intelligence, its perception of what could be accomplished and of what should be, seem superhuman. To make its accomplishment secure it needed the support not only of hard heads and of enthusiastic hearts, but of such righteous enthusiasm as should sanction these with the ineffable force of the spirit. It must reconcile to itself until they should eagerly work for its beneficence the nobly divergent idealists who found themselves in common checked by the colossal material progress of its development. This proved beyond its power. It was compelled, in great degree, to rely on the service of time-servers, while the servants of eternity stood

resolutely apart from it, just as they stood apart from one another. It gave rise to its own new tradition, of an earthly system stimulating every man to win for himself whatever should prove within his power; but it soon proved unable to resist the combined forces arrayed against it. Force brought it into political being, and kept it there through some dozen years, altering the face and the history of all Europe; in the end it succumbed to force, just as the Revolution had succumbed to its own, and the elder monarchy to the force of the Revolution. Traditional system cannot ignore fact; but neither can any system devised by human ingenuity ignore the power of devotedly cherished ancestral tradition.

So came the Restoration, to a France variously changed from that over which Louis XVI had reigned five-and-twenty years before. It was not only that the Revolution and the Empire had altered the face of the country, and the system of its administration, and the details of its law. More deeply still, each had left double traces of its own. Each had established, in fleeting power, a spiritual tradition distinct from that of former times, yet brought from the region of fancy and speculation into that of historical memory by the fact of its temporary political dominance; each had its traditions and its

heroes; this of itself would have been enough to alter the whole situation. But above and beyond this soared the fact that both the Revolution and the Empire had come into being by force, and had been put down by force, in turn. In the year 1815 there was not in the world a single Frenchman of mature years who could not vividly remember at least two violent alterations in the form of sovereignty demanding his allegiance. Here already was a third. Whatever the abstract sanction of the new sovereignty, at least a generation must elapse before its renewed power could find itself secured by the sanction of persistence.

It is never safe to put too much trust in epigram. A familiar epigram concerning the temper of the Restoration, nevertheless, contains truth enough to be worth recalling. When the men who had been exiled under the Republic and the Empire came back to France and to power, and when the turncoats and the trimmers — the time-servers and the honest seekers for practical expediency — renewed their professions of loyalty to the hereditary crown, some one said of the reinstated possessors of sovereignty that during their twenty years of misfortune they had neither learned nor forgotten anything: — "*Ils n'ont rien appris, ni rien oublié.*" To some de-

gree, this pleasantry seems just. In the nature of things, the desire of restored royalty was to revive, so far as might be, the state of affairs which had existed before royalty had been dethroned. As we have seen already, the fatal fault of the old *régime*, at least in temperament, had been a blind confidence that its system was strong enough to admit and to ignore the accumulating force of hostile or inconsistent fact. The restored monarchists had not found experience destructive to their prejudices; rather, the maintenance of prejudice, in the presence of misfortune, had been with them a point of honor. They remained disposed to ignore unwelcome fact; and among the unwelcome facts which they tried to ignore, or to suppress, were the three new historical traditions of the nation over which they were recalled to rule: the tradition of the Republic, the tradition of the Empire, and the tradition that the actual government of the country was a comparative novelty, resting, in final analysis, on the successful exercise of physical force. In spite of their reactionary conservatism, they retained power for fifteen years, in the course of which the legitimate heir of Henry IV and Louis XIV succeeded to the crown as regularly as had any of his predecessors, crowned at Rheims in undisturbed elder time. But the

combined historic forces which were gathering against them finally proved irresistible. The Revolution of 1830 closed the history of legitimate monarchy in France.

It was succeeded by a new attempt to found a system untested by historical experience. For eighteen years there was a constitutional monarchy, resting on the will of the people, and traditionally remembered as a period when the *bourgeoisie* was called upon to play the part of aristocracy. It did so, with eagerly conscientious effort and somewhat imperfect grace. Meanwhile the elder tradition of the Revolution, suppressed since the establishment of the Empire, was gathering renewed force. At the end of eighteen years it once more became irresistible; constitutional monarchy came to a violent end, just as legitimacy had come before it, and empire, and the republic, and the old *régime* — all in less than sixty years.

Thereupon history recapitulated itself, with enough variation to save it from the charge of imitative monotony. First came four years of republican government, which soon passed into the presidency of Louis Napoleon, much as the first Republic had passed into the consulship of the first and the greatest of the Bonapartes. The *Coup d'État* and 1852 revived the name, the tra-

ditions, and the purposes of the Empire. For eighteen years Napoleon III remained on the throne, striving in his own way and his own time to accomplish what his uncle had failed to accomplish half a century before. It is pathetically characteristic of him that those who knew him personally, while frank in acknowledging his errors and weaknesses, are almost at one in their testimony that he was at heart an honest philanthropic idealist, intent on being the regenerator and the savior of society. How little he succeeded men not yet beyond middle life can still remember for themselves. The royalist tradition and the republican refused to nestle into reconciliation beneath the wings of the imperial eagle; so did the somewhat less venerable tradition of the Orleanists, loyal to their constitutional monarchy. And, even more than the first French emperor, the second proved lacking in such moral power as should blend the rising discords in new and grander harmony than had been sounded before. The course of history pursued its way till the fatal year of 1870. The Second Empire succumbed to such force as had originated it, but under circumstances more appalling than any within the memory of living Frenchmen. For when it fell the country was overwhelmed by armed foreign invasion, such as

imperial tradition had led France to fancy that only French power could inflict on the territory of a neighbor.

Almost as a makeshift, a new republic came into being, — itself, like all the governments since the fall of Louis XVI, the offspring of an armed revolution; it was forced to reconquer its own capital city of Paris by the brute force of civil conflict. And after a while peace was made with invading Prussia, strengthened by its victorious warfare into the new dignity of imperial Germany. And the last monarch of the French was suffered to pass his few remaining days in England, where Charles X and Louis Philippe had gone before him. It is said at the British Museum that, as long as he had the strength left, he used to come, alone and unrecognized by the public, to a table reserved for him in the old reading-room, and there turn page after page of the newspapers recording the story of his fall; and they remember that he was apt to wear a rusty hat. And so the sovereignty of the French came once more into the hands of the people. The Third Republic has escaped revolution.

Now, to remind ourselves of what this historical experience must inevitably have meant to the national temperament of France, we may best consider a concrete case. By chance, the life-

time of an eminent American man of letters affords us this opportunity. On August 1st, 1791, there was born in Boston, under the presidency of George Washington, the distinguished historian of Spanish Literature, Mr. George Ticknor. His birthday came within less than a month of the time when the Revolutionary Assembly of France, after devising a constitution, passed that suicidal ordinance of self-denial which prevented every human being who had helped make the constitution from having anything to do with the practical management of it once in operation. Mr. Ticknor remained a citizen of Boston all his life, and died there, on the 26th of January, 1871, two days before the armistice between France and Germany was signed under the walls of Paris. Through all his eighty years he had lived a citizen of our American republic, founded, as we have seen, on conservative and not on destructive revolution. He had seen the tradition of national union strengthen until it had proved powerful enough to survive the most threatening civil war in modern history. During his lifetime seventeen presidents of the United States had regularly succeeded to the chair of Washington; he died during the first administration of General Grant. And there was not a moment in all his lifetime

when, however disturbed the conditions of American politics might have seemed, he had lived under any other system of government than that under which he came into the world.

Had he been a Frenchman, on the other hand, he would have lived under six distinct systems of sovereignty — the Republic, the Empire, the Restoration, the Constitutional Monarchy of Louis Philippe, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire — each founded on destructive revolution, and each determined to impose on his country a new system forcibly reducing inconvenient fact to practicable order. Each in turn would have succumbed to armed revolutionary force. And none of the six would have survived so long that its actual beginning and something of what came before could help being within the personal memory of every man under its sway who had reached the age of twenty-five years.

Temperamentally, the while, each of these sovereignties must have had deep significance in the history of his country and lasting effect on it as well. The French, as we have seen, cannot be understood until we sympathetically acknowledge both their love for order and system and the intellectual candor with which they recognize unwelcome fact. Every one of these six systems

of government may be regarded as an effort to invent a new system which should comprehend fact as fully as might be, and then should impose itself by force on the life and the intelligence of the country. Every one of them appealed to the honest convictions of a considerable body of Frenchmen, so sincere that they remained faithful to it even in defeat and in despair. Every one of them consequently gave rise to traditions of its own, devoutly cherished, and — like all fervent convictions — deserving of respect. As has been the case with religious disputes in France, the very ardor and sincerity of these political convictions made them seem to their devotees completely, divinely true; and, very clearly, to compromise matters of truth or conscience is unworthy of honest men. The inevitable result of the Revolution follows: in politics, as in religion, the French of the nineteenth century have been more than intolerant of one another, and to all appearances incapable of doing one another the justice of mutual understanding. The very fact that in spirit they have been so nearly at one is what has kept them in the flesh discordantly apart.

Among the gathering political traditions of France, the three on which we have chiefly touched emerge distinct. The first is that of

the Royalists, honest believers in the divine right of ancestral kings strong in authority derived from God himself. According to this creed, the personal vagaries of the sovereign can no more impair his hereditary rights and privileges than the errors of a clergyman can impair the virtues of his sacred office. That is a matter to settle not with men, but with God. With the wisdom or with the historical basis for this extreme of idealism we have for the moment nothing to do. Our business is to pay it the due of sympathetic respect. The second vital political tradition of France is the philanthropic creed of the Revolution, proclaiming the Rights of Man, and insisting on the untested, impracticable ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Until we understand these ideals as the nobler revolutionary spirit conceived them, and not as the baser revolutionary spirit essayed to exhibit them in practice, we cannot understand the secret of their undeniable vitality. The third political tradition persistent in France is that of the Empire, best conceived as a colossal effort to establish an authoritative system for keeping careers generously open to talent. The conception at the root of Royalist tradition is that human nature is so evil as to demand control; that at the root of Revolutionary tradition

is that human nature is so good as to merit freedom; that at the root of Imperial tradition is that, good or evil, human nature should have its deserts.

It is hardly excessive, I think, to indicate these ideals thus simply. It would be the height of folly, however, to pretend that any such statement is comprehensive. If we went no farther, indeed, the men most conscientiously devoted to any one of them might willingly give no small degree of assent to the others. And nothing is more clear, as a matter of plain fact, than that Royalists, Revolutionists, and Imperialists in France have not only been in mortal opposition to one another, but that, with the enthusiastic fervor of French character, they have honestly held one another in deep spiritual abhorrence. Men who believe themselves possessors of light cannot help believing those who differ from them to be ministers of darkness. Whoever would understand the effect of the Revolution on French temperament must grasp the truth that all three of these discordant ideals have inspired, and to some degree inspire still, enthusiastic and conscientious devotees. And this complexity of ideals is not the only historical result of the Revolution. An equally profound one springs from the fact that every government

which living Frenchmen have been able to remember — or any Frenchman who came into the world after 1790 — has been a government based on armed force. The form of sovereignty at any given time has accordingly presented itself to the candid minds of the French not so much in the character of a national establishment as in that of a partisan tyranny. The devoted effort of the Revolution to supplant an old system by a newer and a truer has led to incessant imitation, until any system, as formulated on the surface of the state, has come to seem experimental, doctrinarian, transitory, insecure.

And yet, all the while, the moments when anyone who has known France has believed it in danger of anarchical paralysis, have been few and far between. At least since the renewal of systematic order under the supreme guidance of the first Napoleon, the legal and the social system of the country — the true life of the nation — has been far less disturbed than people distracted by the superficial instability of ruling systems have been apt to suppose. Under the Reign of Terror itself, they say, the theatres and the museums were regularly open; and you could get as good things to eat and drink as ever, in the familiar places where they served you better than anywhere else in the world. The only dif-

ference was that the old faces which used to make those places gay were no longer gladdening them; and a few of the faces were no longer gladdening the sunshine anywhere. So it has been throughout. Not many years ago, some character in a novel or a play lamented the havoc wrought in French society by the Revolution. He was answered in an epigram which has lingered in my memory. "*La Révolution n'existe que pour les sots*," it ran — "Anyone who is not a fool can see that there is no such thing as the Revolution." Far from comprehensively true, this flippant piece of trivial wit. The scars of the Revolution are still seamed over the whole face of France; and the memories of it, and of what ensued, rend France asunder to this day. But all the while men and women have lived and died, and loved and lost and won, just as they lived and died and loved before, and as they shall live and love and die so long as humanity stays human. No system ever devised can make men other than men; nor can any ever make their aspirations, however noble, completely consonant.

A vivid example of what every-day existence has remained in France came to my notice a little while ago. In the summer of 1906 the newspapers announced that a man had just died in Paris at the age of almost a hundred years.

This of itself might have deserved passing notice; the peculiarity of his case deserves more. At some time before 1830, it appears, this worthy person, who had held some small position in the domestic service of King Charles X, had been granted by that sovereign a modest pension, befitting his station in life. The Revolution of 1830 had occurred, and that of 1848; the *Coup d'État*, too, and the fall of the Second Empire. Through all these disturbances the pensioner of the last Legitimist king had regularly presented himself on the days when his pension was due and had regularly received it, for more than seventy-five years. The nominal government of France had changed over and over again; but not its methods of conducting business, or its habit of meeting even its smallest obligations. For this anecdote, to be sure, I have no better authority than newspapers. It may be mistaken, or even a mere invention. In spirit, nevertheless, it is deeply true. No changes in government or in avowed ideals and aspirations have affected the unbroken national persistency of France.

If they had, France could not be at this moment what any observer, however casual, must recognize it to be. The disaster of 1870 might well have been thought crushing; yet, in a very few years, it was only a matter of history, like the

Revolution of July, or the Reign of Terror, or the Republican Calendar. The facts of French life, as we have touched on them together — revealing everywhere such persistent, serious, and cheerful devotion to system in private affairs — would testify to a state of existence as far from anarchical as any in the world. Yet, all the while, this France of to-day, this France of the Third Republic, is perforce a France animated not by a single great national tradition, but by three discordant ones, each with its heroes and its devotees. It has learned from its century of recurrent revolutions the mischievous lesson that no form of government may prudently believe itself permanently stable. What now concerns us is the question of how contemporary France confronts its problems and its duties.

VIII

THE REPUBLIC AND DEMOCRACY

WHEN we compare the present system of government in France with the various others which have flourished and fallen since the Revolution overthrew the traditional monarchy, at least two circumstances distinguish it from all the rest. The first is that in origin it was not deliberate. Foreign invasion had resulted in the fall of the Empire; a prosional government was a matter of necessity; and from this provisional government the republican system still in existence was presently developed, by methods of debate rather than of violence. Though, beyond dispute, the republic had intense partisans, their convictions would hardly have established it but for the solid fact that no other proposed plan of government, royalist or imperial, proved for the moment practicable; something had to be done, and this seemed, on the whole, the only thing to do. Exceptional though the tragic conditions of its beginning were, there is, accordingly, a case for

those who should maintain, with what seems paradox, that the present Republic is the most normal form of French government since the old *régime*. For it is the only one forced upon the country by the hard logic of necessity. All the others were based on the revolutionary precedent of supplanting the regularly constituted authorities by armed force — a process which, of course, resulted in making the suppressed parties revolutionists themselves, duly waiting their turn. The republic, no doubt, has as much doctrine of its own as either empire or royalty — whether Orleanist or Legitimist; but this doctrine is rather the defence of its power than the basis.

Even if this were the only circumstance to distinguish it from the forms of government to whose authority it has succeeded, it would stand conspicuously alone. A second circumstance makes its position doubly clear. Whether the unrecognized normality of its origin has had anything to do with its endurance or not — the question might well prove debatable — the fact of its endurance is now settled. Between the outbreak of the Revolution and the fall of the Second Empire no French sovereignty had maintained itself for more than eighteen consecutive years. There had consequently never been a period when everyone in the country who had

attained the age of twenty-five could not personally remember both a widely different political system from that of the moment and also the revolutionary disturbances by means of which the government actually in power had come into existence. During the first years of the Third Republic it must have seemed as palpable a political novelty as almost any other sovereignty within living memory. By the year 1888, however, it had already survived as long as either the reign of Louis Philippe or the Second Empire, its two most durable predecessors; and by 1906 the interval since 1888 had become as long as that between 1888 and 1870. For thirty-six years the actual form of government in France had already remained unbroken by revolution; and there was not a living Frenchman under the age of forty, whatever his political convictions, who could personally remember any other system than that under which the French are contentedly or restlessly living at this moment. Almost insensibly the present Republic of France is growing to have such sanction as must come to any institutions from time wherein the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.

This of itself would give the Third Republic a chance of stability not enjoyed by any other French system of the nineteenth century. When

governments, as when children, survive the dangers of infantile disease, their prospects of survival to a hale old age are indefinitely strengthened. The important question becomes whether anything seems to be organically the matter with them. In the case of a government such questions are extremely complicated. They involve all manner of statistics, for one thing; for another, they are always confused by the methods of practice common among political experts and political quacks alike. Politicians, particularly when they have brewed panaceas of their own, are everywhere eager to prove that the state needs their medicine. Their habitual eloquence, accordingly, resembles that of the travelling vender of pills who declared that the great art of his profession was not the selling of his remedies, but knowing how you could talk so as to make a crowd feel sick. In such quandary, an unprofessional listener, affected with qualms, has no resource but to look at the crowd for himself. Whatever its momentary misgivings, there is a strong probability that, if it appears healthy, it is really in sound condition.

If any traveller in France thus considers the aspect of the country in the thirty-seventh year of the Third Republic, he can hardly avoid the impression that nothing could appear more pros-

perous. Other countries, to be sure, may look more aggressively enterprising; you will perhaps see elsewhere more obtrusive novelties of trade and manufacture, or notice more bustle; but you will nowhere discover more constant evidence of solid and substantial welfare. From Flanders and Normandy to Provence, wherever you go, — from the Atlantic to the Alps, too, — you will find less evidence of poverty, of idleness, of misery, than will force itself on your attention almost anywhere else in the world. To rely too strongly on such an impression as this may be imprudent; yet one cannot rationally neglect it. Travellers' tales have their value as well as their limitations; and a pervasive national prosperity, a sound national virtue, is a fact as incontrovertible as any assertion of statistics or philosophy. What is more, there are moods in which you are disposed to think it more significant than the best of them. No government, to be sure, could produce such prosperity as must impress travellers throughout France, unless the people under its control were vigorous, intelligent, and thrifty; but no vigor or intelligence or thrift on the part of a people could produce it unless the government were, on the whole, salutary. Whatever statistics or philosophy may tell you, the general condition of France

at the present day is evidence enough for any traveller that throughout the memory of all men under forty years of age the government has been not only unbroken, but efficient — that it has really worked for the public good.

Whether it has worked any better than some other political system might have done, or even so well as might have been the case with some other, is evidently another question. In other countries, or at other epochs, this question might have been merely academic. In France, throughout the existence of the Third Republic, it has often seemed one of practical politics. As we have already reminded ourselves, the present constitution of France, though it has had the good fortune to survive beyond the limit of average human memory, began almost as a makeshift during a period of unprecedented national disaster, threatening anarchical revolution. At the moment, almost all Frenchmen were willing to submit themselves to it provisionally. For many of them, however, it was, at best, only a prudent temporary alternative for some other form of government in their opinion superior. The Empire had fallen, for the moment; but the spirit of the imperialists was not yet extinct. And, as everyone knows, the whole force of the Empire, even when it seemed most dominant, had in no

wise impaired the spirit of devoted royalists — Legitimist or Orleanist — any more than it had smothered that of enthusiastic republicans. What is more, everybody in the whole world could vividly remember the reign of Napoleon III; men still in the full vigor of middle life could remember that of Louis Philippe; and it was only forty years since Louis Philippe had dethroned Charles X — little longer than it is now since Napoleon III surrendered at Sedan. Evidently, the present Republic began its career under great disadvantages. Throughout France there were admirably honest Frenchmen who ardently believed that the country could not fully prosper until it returned to one or another of the three rival systems.

Each of the three, too, had a personally respectable pretender to the throne. Had any of these aspirants to hereditary sovereignty possessed a dominantly commanding personality, the course of history might have taken another turn than we have been considering together. In this respect fortune favored the Republic. Without venturing to criticise the character of any of the three, we can hardly fail to agree that none of them was graced with such power as excites popular enthusiasm, Even from the beginning, accordingly, the Republic was in less danger than

might otherwise have been the case of succumbing to some freshly revolutionary assertion of royalist or imperialist tradition. And the course of events during the past thirty-six years has gone far to avert what danger of such fate may have originally existed. The direct line of Napoleon III is extinct; so is that of Charles X. The Orleanist prince who has succeeded to the Legitimist claim is not even descended, in male line, from Louis XIV; and the present heir of the Bonapartes must go back to the Corsican lawyer of the eighteenth century to show his kinship to either of the French emperors. Neither of these gentlemen, furthermore, is any more fortunate than the pretender whose claims he inherits, in the matter of personal qualities irresistible to public imagination. It may seem needless to repeat that nothing is further from my purpose than to make any comment whatever on their private characters, which I am led to believe deserving of universal esteem. The plain truth is that neither of them, for all his honorable virtues, has the gift of such distinction as should make people in general quite sure of just who he is. A pretender whom you have to verify in the "Almanach de Gotha" is no longer a serious menace — unless, in time to come, he remove himself from those impressive pages into the sunshine

and shadow of open air. At this moment, accordingly, the claims of rival traditions to the sovereignty of France seem less threatening to established order than at any previous time since 1815.

For all this, these rival traditions persist to the present day; and they have sometimes been real dangers to the Republic. Even though they no longer present themselves in so serious a light, the effect of them is evident throughout France. For years they were well within the range of practical politics. So long as they remained there, they could not help emphasizing the fact that, as a form of government, the Republic is based on only one aspect of French tradition — on the tradition of the Revolution, so passionately contradictory of royalist and of imperial tradition alike. In many ways the Republic has done nothing to mitigate this emphasis; rather it has gloried in the tradition peculiar to itself. Had it done otherwise, it might have been more prudent, but it certainly would have been less French. There is something pleasantly typical in the device on the reverse of its gold coinage. Instead of the imperial eagle, we have the Gallic cock. To all appearance, this spirited bird is in the act of crowing — for the purpose, one opines, of reminding us that he is on top of the

heap; which is very delightful for the cock, but not conciliatory to the temper of less fortunate fowls. The same spirit shows itself more sedately in republican inscriptions now so profusely decorating the public buildings of France. Wherever you go, the words "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," stare you in the face, never suffering you to forget that the watchwords of the Revolution are once more those of the government in full possession of power. Another vivid example of the spirit in question happens to rise straight to the surface of my memory. Among the masterpieces of Renaissance architecture in France is the Château of St. Germain, a great part of which was erected in the reign of King Francis I. It was accordingly decorated, like many other of his buildings, with his personal device, the salamander, and with the initial "F" of his royal name. In the course of time it fell out of repair, and furthermore was disfigured by various additions and surrounded by other buildings, of neither dignity nor importance. Within a few years the government has undertaken to restore it, as an historical monument. The restoration, executed with intelligence and skill, is now so far advanced that in certain places it has reached the stage of finishing touches, of ornamental detail. Here the salamander writhes

as splendidly as ever; and here, as in the elder time, admirably designed initials alternate with him. But the new initials of the restored palace are not those of King Francis. Instead of "F" you perceive "R. F." everywhere. The Republic does not show itself quite confident enough to admit the past. Thus, by its own act, it reveals what still seems true. Even to this day it presents itself, both to its partisans and to its opponents, not so much in the light of an established national government as in that of a temporarily dominant political party.

In spite of this, we should be much mistaken if we supposed its career exactly like that of some party which should have proved able to maintain itself indefinitely in power under a system like our own. In the course of its career, it has come, at different times, under the control of very different kinds of people. There have been moments in its existence when it has so nearly passed into the hands of sympathizers with royalist tradition that the advent of a king seemed close at hand; radical though its revolutionary devices must always have appeared, it has occasionally found itself under the management of people whose impulses were certainly conservative, if not reactionary. In other words, if we are disposed to liken the Republic to a dominant party,

as distinguished from a system of government established by full consent of the governed, we must never suffer ourselves to forget that it resembles a party composed of discordant factions rather than one vigorously united by general devotion to a common purpose.

Viewing the matter in this light, one would naturally suppose that when any faction found itself dominant it would behave, as a matter of obvious policy, in a conciliatory manner. Precisely this form of amenity seems one of the few which the French are impulsively unable to practise. Wherever you go in France you find aggressive assertions on the part of every faction or party ever in control of affairs that it has had its way, if only for a while. The Gallic cock of the Republic struts crowing on coins which are still popularly described as napoleons; the cockerels which France has hatched for him show themselves of the pure breed.

An obvious example of this tendency must instantly attract the notice of any visitor to Paris at the present day. The capital city of the Republic is, in most respects, very like the capital of the Second Empire. Viewed from any distance or from any height, however, it proves to be dominated by two lofty structures erected under the present system of government. And

these rise so conspicuously above all the rest of Paris that they inevitably catch the eye, and linger in memory as the most salient features of the view. One is the Eiffel Tower, a most remarkable achievement of construction in riveted steel. Its loftiness and the structural accuracy of its lines give it something more like dignity and beauty than you would have supposed possible. At the same time this network of metal pushed skyward has no aspect of permanence. It seems only a colossal piece of eccentric ingenuity, devised for the purpose of amusing the crowds who flocked from everywhere to one of the international expositions. It has outlasted its advertising purpose; and, as it still attracts and amuses a good many travellers every year, it stands there still, a huge plaything. But it does not look as if it need stand there very long. When people grow tired of playing with it, you fancy, it will be taken down and sold for old metal. And everybody will be happy — including those sensitive persons whose artistic susceptibilities are wounded whenever they look at the monster. It has never done any harm to anybody else; it is said to have proved a lucrative investment.

The other structure which now surmounts Paris is in all respects dissimilar — except that there might be a case for those who should

maintain it no more beautiful. The highest hill within the limits of the city — Montmartre — is at present crowned not with the houses and the windmill which distinguished it in former times, but with a huge domed edifice, unmistakable in its ecclesiastical character, yet so obviously modern in its lines that you can perceive it instantly to be a brand-new monument of the wealth and the power resident in the Church a few years ago. This sumptuous sanctuary, you presently discover, is the new Church of the Sacred Heart, specially consecrated to an extremely French species of mystic devotion. It symbolizes that aspect of the Church which is most intensely enthusiastic, and least concerned with the affairs of this world. It stands not for the inexhaustible charity of Christianity, forever bringing aid and comfort to the poor and unfortunate, earnestly endeavoring to mitigate the ills of life. It stands rather for such holy ecstasies as those who doubt or dislike the Church conceive to be little better than drunkenness of the spirit. It is immensely expensive; millions on millions of devout francs have been consecrated to it by the faithful. Every centime of them has gone into its masonry and its decorations, to remain fixed there forever. For its foundation and its walls are as solid as human skill can make them. The church has been built

on Montmartre to dominate Paris as long as Paris shall stay on earth to be dominated. And, for fear that it might sometimes escape the notice of Parisians, the country-folk of Savoy have given their savings to buy for it the biggest bell to be bought for money. They promise you, I believe, that when the "Savoyard" is sounded, you shall hear the note of it in every cranny of the capital city of the French Republic.

All of which is admirable in its way. One cannot too deeply respect the self-sacrificing devotion with which the Catholics of France have thus testified to the living persistency of their faith. If any splendor of enshrinement shall really contribute "*ad majorem Dei gloriam*," no man who can sympathize with the longings of the human soul would ever grudge the Church a bit of it. But you cannot be long in Paris without learning that this colossal new place of worship has another aspect than this primary one of testifying to the depth of orthodox devotion still persistent among the French. As is well known, a great number of honest republicans have believed, throughout the nineteenth century, that the Christian religion, particularly in its purely devotional aspects, is a relentless obstacle to human progress. To men of this disposition the most unwelcome of all French cults is the ado-

ration of the Sacred Heart — for the reason that it carries people farthest in sympathy from the things of this world, directing their attention rather to mystical ecstasy in regions which they believe heavenly. To unbelievers, in short, this worship stands for the acme of superstition. It is therefore the form of devotion most certain to excite their antagonism.

When the Republic was for a while in reactionary hands, and the men temporarily in power were disposed rather to sympathize with the Church than to oppose it, you might accordingly have expected them, as prudent statesmen, to have taken this phase of opposition into consideration. You might have expected the Church itself to have displayed a similar spirit. There are aspects enough and to spare in which Catholic Christianity is obviously beneficent. These, you might have thought, would be chosen for emphasis by both its clergy and its laity. The last thing which you could have supposed astute men to favor would have been manifestations of their more exasperating points of difference from fellow citizens who had the misfortune to hold them in distrust. Yet with free choice of conduct, they preferred the most extreme imaginable manifestation of such difference. Churchmen eagerly proposed this co-

lossal monument of the Sacred Heart; the government of the moment consented to it. And there it stands to-day, a monument of several other facts as well. It reminds everybody that for a while the clerical spirit was dominant in the Third Republic; it reminds everybody that the moment it became so, it proceeded to celebrate its dominance in the most obtrusive and self-glorifying way — and also in the hardest to obliterate when politics should take another turn. It reminds everybody that this other turn of politics has ensued. It reminds all who enthusiastically delight in the doctrines it stands for that these are no longer in power. It reminds everybody who distrusts or hates them that, if they once get into power again, their enemies need look for little mercy at their hands. At best, no matter what may have been the actual motives of its builders, it reminds the whole world that they were willing to set up, the moment they could do so, a constant and aggressive cause of provocation to any compatriots not in sympathy with the phase of national temper which it so sumptuously represents.

Even as yet, I believe, the Church of the Sacred Heart is nowhere near finished. Meanwhile, as we have already reminded ourselves, the govern-

ment of the Republic has fallen into far from clerical hands. These more intense republicans have not as yet set on foot a Temple of Reason, or whatever else, to dwarf the Sacred Heart. On the other hand, they have lost few opportunities of asserting their own opinions in fashions quite as aggressive as that practised by clerical sympathizers a few years ago. All over France you will find monuments to the worthies of the Republic and the heroes of the Revolution. In the Louvre itself, the two monuments which vie with the Arch of the Carrousel are a most restless one in memory of Gambetta, and a sketch for an equestrian statue not yet cast of that hero of two republics, Lafayette. One of the avenues which radiate from the Arc de Triomphe has been deprived of its name of imperial victory and given instead that of Victor Hugo; and this not because he was an eminent poet, but because he was a staunch republican opponent of the Empire. There is hardly a French town of any considerable size anywhere, indeed, which has not given his name to a principal street. And just such violent, instantly aggressive changes of nomenclature are still occurring everywhere.

Now the use of a name, either for an individual or for a locality, is obviously to serve as a means

of identification. Any alteration of a name, accordingly, is inconvenient and confusing. This reasonable consideration seems rarely to present itself to the minds of enthusiastic French republicans. They are at present disposed rather to regard the names of public places as instruments of doctrinal propagation. At Dijon, for example, one of the most memorable local worthies is Saint Bernard, who was born in a little village overlooking the old Burgundian capital. A bronze statue in his honor was very properly erected there some years ago; and the square which surrounded it — in a new part of the town — was duly named the Place Saint-Bernard. How long it retained the name I do not know. At present it has been renamed the Place Étienne Dolet. So far as I am informed, Étienne Dolet had little if anything to do with Dijon; but beyond question the conduct of this skilful printer, who flourished at the period of the Reformation, was such as to get him into trouble, and he was ultimately burned at the stake. The reason why his name has replaced that of Saint Bernard is not that he was a more memorable personage, or that he had anything like so much reason for commemoration on the spot in question. It is simply that Saint Bernard was a canonized worthy of the Catholics, and that Étienne Dolet was a

heretic, whose memory must remain obnoxious to Catholic tradition. They have left the saint on his pedestal; but no one who believes in the faith he preached can see him there without reminder that this faith no longer has the best of it.

Again, in the city of Lyons there existed, a few years ago, three distinct streets, which very conveniently had three distinct names. What these names were I do not remember. The fact permanently impressed on my mind is that at present all three bear the same name — that of Émile Zola. They are distinguished, I believe, as Rue, Avenue, and Boulevard; or perhaps one of them is a Place, and not a street. All I feel quite sure of is that the confusion is annoying to travellers and to cabmen. It is more than annoying — it is persistently exasperating — to residents in any of the three who do not chance unreservedly to admire the work of the eminent novelist in question. Even his most eager admirers can hardly deny his tendency to pornographic excess, which goes far to counteract the impression of his indisputable power. Few would pretend him, as a man of letters, a model for the young. But this is not the question. During the progress of the Dreyfus affair he devoted himself, with immense enthusiasm, to the cause of what he believed to be justice. In so doing he was

probably encouraged by the fact that he found arrayed against him the general consent of the Church — an institution of which he had been a violent opponent throughout his literary life. The certain fact is that, as a most conspicuous advocate for Dreyfus, he made himself particularly objectionable to conservative and clerical people who believed, on general principles, that a case, once decided, had better not be reopened. Meanwhile, this same line of conduct had made him a partisan hero of the anticlericals. Anticlerical people came into power at Lyons. Among the first things they proceeded to do in the heat of their victory was to name for Zola not one public place, but three separate ones. The conciliatory wisdom of this proceeding seems rivalled only by its practical good sense.

In some towns this process has been carried further still. I remember one where a number of small streets bore extremely local names. These I did not take the precaution to copy; but they run somewhat as follows: "Rue Jean Duval (Maire 1882)." Without the parenthesis even the oldest inhabitant might now be at pains to remember who Jean Duval was. His name, however, has supplanted that of the saint for whom the street had been named ever since the Middle Ages; and if you should take the pains

to look into his municipal history, you might very likely discover that he had fallen out with the priest in charge of the neighboring church. Now, whatever the personal merits or faults of Jean Duval, there can be little question that his name is not so easy to remember as that of Saint Peter, we will say; and consequently that it is intrinsically less adapted to the purpose of naming a street. I ventured to make this observation to a republican inhabitant of the town in question. He admitted the justice of my view, except, he went on to say, that it showed a foreigner's ignorance of the local situation. My argument, it seems, had actually been presented to the authorities of the town; the householders of the street had preferred its old name, as a matter of obvious convenience; the authorities had been disposed to take their view of the case; the matter had been laid over till the next meeting of the local council. But then, what happened? M. le Curé had preached a jubilant sermon to the effect that an impious attempt to dislodge Saint Peter had been frustrated by the faithful; the clerical newspaper of the town had flapped its wings and crowed like the cock of Saint Peter himself. And at the next meeting of the town authorities down went Saint Peter and up went Jean Duval. The unhappy saint, it appeared,

had ceased to be a topographical fact, and had become a political.

A more familiar manifestation of this spirit was widely published a few years ago. The law courts of the Republic, continuing the tradition of the Empire, and I believe of all French governments since the Concordat, had been ornamented with crucifixes, which meant, in point of fact, just about as much as the Bibles used for the administration of oaths in English or American courts of justice. The anticlerical authorities of the Republic came to the conclusion that these had best be removed. In this they showed good sense. There was no actual relation between the administration of French law and the doctrines of Catholic Christianity. There was no reason for pretending that any existed. The crucifix was evidently exasperating to anticlerical prejudice. The absence of it, when people once got used to the new state of things, need not excite any prejudice whatever. If the crucifixes had been quietly taken away from the court-rooms, accordingly, the process might have been salutary, as distracting from public notice an evident matter of rancorous dispute. Instead of seizing this opportunity, the Republican authorities preferred to emphasize their anticlerical sentiments in the strongest way they could

think of. So, of all days in the year, they selected Good Friday for publicly removing from their courts of justice the traditional image of Christ. One's mind recurs, in contrast, to the old story of the high-church parson who converted his communion-table into an altar by moving it an inch every week, until — quite undetected by his evangelical congregation — he got it safe against the wall.

In fact, as we have reminded ourselves enough and to spare, whenever the extreme partisans of the Republic in France have got the government into their hands, they have conducted themselves with no more reserve, with no more attempt to conciliate doubtful or hostile sympathy, than was shown by reactionary people when for a while these had the best of it in Republican politics. Rather they have been disposed to dwell triumphantly on every detail of the differences between themselves and their conscientious opponents. They have insisted on the full extent of their radical doctrines. They have exulted in every triumph. They have often behaved, in fact, as if they were complete advocates of a partisan tyranny, differing chiefly from the conventional tyrannies of history in the fact that it pretends to be the tyranny not of an individual, but of a special class describing itself as the people.

Had the Republic, however, really been so radical and so tyrannical as its utterances and its petty acts might lead us to infer, the present state of France could hardly be so healthy and so prosperous as it appears. The Republic seems French to the core, in the fact that it lays down a system as near logical consistency as it can devise. That system has the advantage of being comparatively new; it is consequently contradicted by fewer incompatible facts than would be the case with an old system, like that of the *ancien régime* or that of the Church. Being human, nevertheless, it cannot help being confronted with some facts — among others, with persistent contrary prejudices — not to be reconciled with its doctrines. These, accordingly, it attempts either to ignore or to suppress after the good old human fashion. It does not try to reconcile opposition; it tries rather to impose its own principles, by force of assertion, or, if need be, by civil force. It seems still affected by the youthful dream that men on earth can somehow manage to have their own way.

The principles which it holds and promulgates appear, on the whole, to be those of extreme theoretical democracy. There is no reason to doubt that it holds and promulgates them with sincerity. At the same time, so far as a foreigner

can understand what these principles signify to the French mind, they are by no means identical with the principles of democracy cherished by Americans, who have always lived under a democratic system of government. With us, as with other peoples, the commonplaces of democracy have been popularly set forth during the nineteenth century almost without reserve. In practice, however, American democracy has hitherto confined itself to insistence on the principle that government should derive its just powers from the consent of the governed. It has rather maintained than weakened the traditions of its own constitutional system. It has not attempted class tyranny. We have talked very valiantly about the people and their rights. We have never clearly defined what that term "the people" ought in truth to signify. In conduct, the while, we have acted on the tacit assumption that a complete people consists of no one class or kind of men — high or low, learned or ignorant, few or many; but rather of the inevitable variety of human beings who must exist, each in his own sphere, in any healthy society. Democracy with us seems to mean government by common consent for the common good. Practically, so far as democracy has prospered in France, it has signified even there government for the common good, but with the

element of common consent decidedly subordinated. In theory, however, and it utters its theories with intense effusiveness, it seems to mean among the French a system of government conducted in the interests of the masses, as distinguished from those of the better classes. It fiercely condemned the privileges of the better classes in former times. In their place, it now seems determined to do all in its power to establish something like privilege for the common people.

How far it remains from anything like such an achievement is proved by the persistence of the better classes throughout France. It is proved by the stability of the general social structure there. It is proved by the beautiful solidarity of French domestic life. It is proved, among people of all classes, by the steady conscientiousness with which they maintain, and transmit to their children, their ancestral traditions. The extreme result of democratic doctrine — the arbitrary supremacy of the lower classes — however generous in impulse and agreeable to fervid faith, is something from which France still seems far as ever. For the practical consequences of theoretical democracy, insisting that the ideal of equality shall supplant that of excellence, would be either utopian or barbarous, or both. And no one who knows contemporary France

could possibly mistake it for either Barbary or Utopia.

How eagerly, on the other hand, the advocates of an equality sanctioned by neither divine law, scientific observation, nor human experience, occasionally try to make their principles dominant, was lately brought to my notice by an anecdote I heard from a professor in a provincial secondary school. He happened to be called on to examine candidates for free instruction — for state scholarships. His subject was French history; the candidates were children from twelve to fifteen years of age who had honorably completed the course of instruction in the primary schools of the region. In general, as I understand the case, they were of the respectable middle class — the smaller *bourgeoisie*, or the more well-to-do peasantry. Their examiner began by asking them various questions concerning the older history of France. Their confusion of mind was appalling. They hopelessly mixed up kings and queens, cardinals and poets, wars and rebellions; the only fixed idea in their minds seemed to be that France had formerly been in a state of deplorable turbulence, much like that which was said once to have been taught concerning ancient Rome in the common schools of Russia: — "The last of the kings was Tar-

quinius Superbus, who was dethroned by an unprincipled demagogue named Brutus. A period of hideous disturbance followed, which was brought to an end by the imperial genius of Julius Cæsar." Startled by the extraordinary ignorance displayed by these young French candidates for honorable distinction in the history of their country, their examiner happened to think that he had put them no questions concerning the Revolution. The moment he touched on that, the clouds rolled away. There was no Revolutionary incident so trivial that they did not know both the circumstances of it and the precise date; some of them could transpose the Revolutionary calendar into the terms of common civilization at a moment's notice; they knew by heart not only the great men of the Revolution, but the smaller ones, too. They had been taught and had learned the history of France, in short — and France, we must remember, was their own dear native land — as if until 1789 the whole country had been plunged in depths of mediæval darkness, too dense to deserve the pains of intelligent exploration.

This case is solitary and perhaps unique. But even if it indicate how apostles of democracy now and then insist that nothing be taught ignorant children except the doctrine and the

legends and the pious tales of the Rights of Man, there is no reason why we should blame their purpose. In its philanthropic sincerity it is as worthy of respect as is the contrary purpose of so many religious teachers, who suppress or distort the facts of heresy everywhere. Whether doctrine, legend, and pious tale be devout or philanthropic, they are honestly meant; they represent conscientious effort to direct the course of children toward righteousness. On the other hand, there can be no question that any teaching of French history which neglects what happened in France throughout its thousand years of pre-Revolutionary existence, deliberately discards a priceless treasure of national tradition. The mood which would dictate such a policy, too — however aspiring and devoted in purpose — involves further injury than this to the full welfare of the nation. It would evidently exclude from public responsibility anyone who holds this elder treasure of national tradition comparable with the newer tradition of Revolutionary philanthropy. Thus it deprives the form of government which it advocates of what, in happier case, might be its most confident hope for endurance.

For no one who comes to know the France of today can question that the men in actual power,

however doctrinarian they may seem, and however tyrannical may seem the acts which they occasionally commit, are men of serious purpose, of alert intelligence, and of moral dignity. But neither can any such visitor doubt that there is equally serious purpose, equally alert intelligence, equal moral dignity, in many of their opponents. Were the republic as a system of government now in open danger, distrust of all sentiment not intensely republican might be a sad necessity of republican polity. As the Republic stands today, one can perceive no reason why a policy of more hearty mutual confidence, of more magnanimous sympathy, should not prove as compatible with astuteness as it would surely be with generosity. France still seems a country of irreconcilable antagonisms; yet France, I believe, has reached a point where such reconciliation is no longer inconceivable.

Born of necessity, as we have seen, the Republic has had the unique fortune of persistence throughout the range of average human memory. It has happily proved favorable to material welfare; and meanwhile chance has greatly weakened the hold on imagination of either of the systems — royalist or imperialist — which during the earlier years of its existence were threatening rivals in their claim to power and to loyalty.

Another fact about it is surely true. All men now living in France, whatever their personal convictions, are men who have lived for more than thirty-five years under no other form of government than this. They have inherited from the traditions of former times the habit of mutual intolerance and suspicion. Each side will honestly tell you, in all solemnity, that the advocates of other principles than theirs are either densely stupid or deliberately wicked. Yet when you meet those other men, who will tell you just the same things about their critics, you cannot feel that in truth they are either unintelligent or evil. In any party, anywhere, there are unworthy people. What is most salient to a traveller among divergent kinds of Frenchmen is not this fact that some of them fail to command his complete esteem. It is rather that wherever he goes, among radicals or reactionaries, devout Catholics or philanthropic philosophers, he will find honest gentlemen, in the best sense of the term. There is less discord of the spirit in France than Frenchmen seem to dream.

There are symptoms, meantime, that the French themselves may at last be approaching a point where they can do more justice to one another than has been quite possible through

the revolutionary nineteenth century. A happy suggestion of this came to me most unexpectedly in the course of an excursion to some interesting old towns in central France. A month or two before, I had written for a French review an article on contemporary politics in America. In the course of this, I had mentioned, as a commonplace, the view of American democracy which I have long entertained: namely, that it is not the tyranny of any one class over any other, but the consent of all classes — none secured by inflexible privilege — to exist together under a system trusted by all to act as guardian and agent of their common welfare. My pleasant provincial vacation had distracted my mind from this little essay in political philosophy. I had passed a delightful day in travelling through beautiful and interesting country; and came hungry to my dinner in the chief hotel of a small town locally famous for romantic mediæval buildings and an excellent secondary school. Some of my neighbors at table presently proved to be teachers in this establishment; they were highly intelligent young men, evidently of extremely republican sympathies; and they were animatedly discussing a phase of democratic doctrine new to them.

To my rather amused surprise, this turned out

to have been suggested by my own article. They had no idea who I was, and, I fancy, not much that I was attending to what they said. In point of fact, however, they were eagerly wondering whether my own published opinion — that a truly healthy democracy could never coexist with a persistent misunderstanding between social classes — might not throw light on the present troubles of France. The democracy of America they freely admitted to display a quality of traditional endurance not yet evident in the newer democracy of their own country. The democracy of France, they went on to say, had always been intolerantly distrustful of the old privileged class, the nobility. They admitted that they had been so themselves; no other course had occurred to them as possible. Was it conceivable that they had been mistaken — that the French people could never be complete unless it grew willing to count as an essential part of itself that very nobility, which, after all, was as French as any of them?

In other words, it appeared, these young Frenchmen had been at least momentarily impressed by two or three of the political suggestions set forth in my article. Any stable national government, for one thing, must take into account the full range of rooted national tradition. This

is obviously the case in England to-day, where the nation, as a whole, cherishes with equal respect and affection the memory of men who took the side of the king in the civil wars of the seventeenth century and of those who took the side of Parliament. In London there are statues of both Charles I and Cromwell; and England could not be the England of our own time if any considerable body of Englishmen now desired to overthrow either of them. Something similar is true already of our own Republic, the United States. Little more than forty years ago, we were engaged in the most portentous civil war of modern history; to-day the survivors of that conflict are fellow-countrymen whose mortal enmities are beginning to be fused in precious historical memories. Our American Republic has had no more loyal services in all its career than it has received already from honest men who fought hard against it through four dreadful years. Monuments to Union soldiers in the North and to Confederate soldiers in the South have already been consecrated by the friendly presence of men who fought against the dead they commemorate. It will not be long, one grows confident, before the descendants of both sides shall find themselves ready to join in equal tribute to the heroes of both. When that time comes, our true

national tradition will come once more to be that of a united country.

Again, it is beyond peradventure that an enduring democracy can never exist when only a portion of a people — a single social class — is dominant, to the exclusion of the rest. Such a state of affairs is a democracy only in name. In fact, it is at best an oligarchy — and oligarchy is oligarchy, whether the ruling class be large or small, high or low. What is more, good sense should seem to remind us that the oligarchical tyranny of the masses must be more dangerous than an oligarchical tyranny of the better sort. For, to put the case at its mildest, the masses must be animated by less intelligence and by more fickle instability of emotion. To us of America, immemorially habituated to the practice of democracy, the notion of submitting ourselves to the direction of a small privileged class is abhorrent. Hardly less so, in reality, would be the notion of submitting ourselves to the absolute sovereignty of a lower class, privileged in point of mere numbers by the very fact of its lack of individual privilege. We are restive at this moment under the suspicion that too much power among ourselves is gathering in the hands of rich men. We are little less restive when we scent the danger of finding our

country at the mercy of trades-unions. It is not that either form of oligarchy might not conceivably work well. It is rather that both alike are oligarchy, and not democracy.

For a true democracy, I cannot too earnestly repeat, must tolerantly include all manner of men. It must give each his due, and demand only its own due from each. It must preserve the structure of society so firmly that the opportunity of a career shall always be open to talent. It must preserve such liberty of the individual that no inherited privilege shall keep weakness long secure, nor stand in the way of ability born in a station too narrow for its power. But it may never safely meddle with the elemental truths of human nature — pretending things excellent which in reality are commonplace. It may never safely deny the fatal fact that most men, in whatever range of human effort, are bound to have their superiors in power, and that civic insecurity is the surest means to offer the semblance of a career not to talent but to mischief. It must recognize in itself not an immortal and inspired system, but only one of the means by which human beings attempt so to govern society that society may advance in prosperity and in righteousness. It must humbly admit itself as subject as any polity which it opposes to the insidious

temptation of tyranny. If democracy can truly rise to such full sense as this of its duties and its limitations, it may grow, by such happy historical chance as has been our own in America, into the venerable sanction of historical tradition. Then, and only then, it can confidently hold high hopes for the future. And these hopes shall be the higher and the more confident, when the nation which submits itself to democracy is such a nation as the France of today, rich with many noble memories instead of with only one. In outward semblance the vital traditions of France seem fatally divergent, but at least they have the deep community of enthusiastic devotion to ideals.

Though the dream that these several ideals can ever be reconciled may well seem utopian, it already has the sanction of a memorable phrase. Again and again, amid surroundings which seemed hopelessly at odds with each other, this same little story was told me, and always with the same admiring acknowledgment of its truth. For it goes straight to the heart, not of one party or another, not of one or another system of doctrinal tradition, but of all alike. It touches the common imagination of the whole people — not in the mere democratic sense of the word, but in that broader and truer sense which makes

the French people comprehend everyone in whose veins French blood is flowing.

The greatest military calamity of the war of 1870 was the surrender of Metz with its intact army, by Marshal Bazaine. What his motive may have been remains debatable. Whatever the case, there can be no doubt that he gave up, without a blow, a force with which the invaders of his country would otherwise have had to reckon. Wherefore, in due time, when the war was finished, he was brought to military trial. There, in his own defence, he maintained that at the moment of his surrender the Empire had fallen. His duty had been to defend the government. With the disappearance of constituted authority it came to an end. The citadel was in the hands of the enemy. The Empire was a thing of the past. What was left to fight for? Nothing — "*Il n'y avait rien.*"

To which instant answer was made by the member of his court of judges who could make it best. From the time when the kingdom of Louis Philippe had fallen the princes of the house of Orleans had been mostly in exile from their native land. Their presence there in any position would have seemed to menace either the Republic which for a little while ensued on the constitutional monarchy or the revived Empire

before which the Second Republic fell. But the moment that France was in national danger, struggling with the terrific force of foreign invasion, the Orleanist princes came back to their country, not as royal personages, but only as Frenchmen. As such they were welcomed with every other loyal exile; and the royal prince who of all his kind has perhaps done most to re-establish the dignity of royal character in the esteem of a radical century was among the officers to sit in judgment on the accused marshal of the Second Empire. It was he — the Duc d'Aumale, the son of Louis Philippe — who made the answer so eloquent to every French heart. There was nothing to defend, said Bazaine — "*Il n'y avait rien.*" "*Monsieur le Maréchal,*" said the royal prince, "*il restait la France*" — "There was France."

So there was, and so there is, and so there shall be. France has been the France of the Empire; France to-day is the France of the Republic; and no Frenchman who would treasure the full richness of his national memories may wisely forget the glories of either. But neither comprehends France, any more than France was completely comprehended in that constitutional monarchy which made the house of Orleans for a while sovereign by the will of the

people. The true France embraces all three, and more and more besides. It is the France of the song of Roland, the France of Saint Louis, the France of Jeanne d'Arc. It is the France of the Renaissance, and the France of Henry IV; the France of Richelieu, and the France which imposed an imperial standard on European civilization during the great century of Louis XIV. It is the France of the old *régime*, as well, the France of the Revolution, and the France of the Empire. It is the France of that bewildering, aspiring nineteenth century over whose history we have been lingering together. No single one of these memories, nor yet of the myriad others which they awaken has created the France of today. All of them together combine to make France heroic — none alone, none apart or neglected. Without every glory of its glorious past, France would be the poorer, the lesser. All of them, blended and shining together, make France that inexhaustibly noble fact which those who come to know it, and thus grow to love it, must always feel it to be.

So when, now and again, good friends were apt to speak of their country as the Republic, I found myself, as I find myself still, disposed in answer to speak not of the Republic, but of France. This implied no lack of eager response

to the kindness with which French Republicans welcomed me to their friendly country. It implied, indeed, no shadow of doubt that the system of the present Republic, strengthening as it is into an immemorial tradition, is the system under which that friendly country may most confidently hope for a future as admirable as its past. What I felt was only that the word "Republic" still might seem to mean not the whole nation, but only the accident of its present sovereignty. To the French themselves the Republic still appears not so much national as partisan. I long, with the best of them, for the time when it shall have grown to be no longer partisan, but national; and I believe that the time will come. But even then we shall be truer to the full splendor of the past if we salute the Republic as France, and not France as the Republic. Nothing less than the utmost can comprehend it all.